W R I T I N G E F F E C T I V E L E T T E R S

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WEATHER BUREAU

Name_____

May 1940

FOREWORD

Every letter is written for a purpose. If the writer uses language which produces the reaction which he desires in the mind of the reader, he has succeeded in writing a good letter. If, on the other hand, the letter lacks clarity, is wordy, evasive, or fails to display interest, it probably will not satisfy the reader. In some cases it may prove offensive to him. Such a letter is best unwritten. The ability to paint the desired word-picture is important in an organization like the Weather Bureau which deals with information and advice rather than in tangible things. Our service consists almost entirely in the transmission of meteorological facts and ideas by word or numeral. This is true whether we work with climatological data, daily bulletins, forecasts or warnings, and whether distribution is by radio, telephone, the printed page or the individual letter. The value of the service depends, therefore, upon our success in expressing in words the ideas which we have in mind.

The "colors" which make up a good word-picture consist of an expert blend of correct usage, phrasing, knowledge of the pertinent facts and understanding of reader psychology. As a preliminary step to any letter, the writer should attempt to visualize himself as the addressee. It is not desirable or possible to write entirely by rule or to impose a single individual style for all correspondence. Nor is perfect composition practicable in every routine letter. Administrators should not try to correct every minor error in construction or phrasing when the sense is not uncertain. But errors susceptible of misinterpretation should be corrected. In the final analysis, the thing which determines the quality of a letter is the reaction which it creates in the mind of the reader. In the hands of an expert it is often possible to word a letter of refusal or disapproval so that the addressee's confidence and good will is not lost.

As an aid in bringing to our attention some principles of effective letter writing Mr. James F. Grady, Correspondence Councilor of the Department, has consented to conduct a series of conferences on the subject, similar to those which he has conducted in a number of other bureaus. In connection with these conferences the following Manual is being compiled. It is based upon a book by Mr. Grady and Mr. Milton Hall. The principles given in that book are here adapted to the needs of the particular bureau. The case studies or problem letters which Mr. Grady will bring out during the discussions will amplify the principles given in the Manual and will point the way to effectiveness in correspondence which will be of assistance to the writer, the stenographer or typist, and the reader.

F. W. Reichelderfer

Chief of Bureau.

LETTER APPRAISAL CHART

This appraisal chart is intended to assist you in revising your own letters or in indicating to others the specific weaknesses of the letters that are submitted to you for review.

Before appraising a letter, be sure to determine its exact purpose. What response is desired from the addressee ?

CAN YOU ANSWER "YES" TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ?

IS THE LETTER:

1. COMPLETE

a. Does it give all information necessary to accomplish its purpose ?

b. Does it answer fully all the questions, asked or implied, in the incoming letter ?

2. CONCISE

a. Does the letter include *only* the essential facts ?

b. Are the ideas expressed in the fewest words consistent with clearness, completeness, and courtesy; have irrelevant details and unnecessary repetition been eliminated ?

3. CLEAR

a. Is the language adapted to the vocabulary of the addressee ?

b. Do the words exactly express the thought ?

c. Is the sentence structure clear ?

d. Is each paragraph one complete thought unit ?

e. Are the paragraphs arranged in proper sequence; are the ideas presented in the most effective order ?

4. CORRECT

a. Is the accuracy of all factual information beyond question ?

b. Are all statements in strict conformity with policies ?

c. Is the letter free from: (1) grammatical errors, (2) spelling errors, (3) misleading punctuation ?

5. APPROPRIATE IN TONE

a. Is the tone calculated to bring about the desired response ?

b. Is the letter free from antagonistic words or phrases ?

c. Is it free from hackneyed or stilted phrases which may amuse or irritate the addressee ?

d. Does the entire letter evidence a desire to cooperate fully ?

6. NEAT AND WELL SET UP

Will a favorable first impression be created by: (1) freedom from strikeovers and obvious erasures; (2) even typing; (3) position of letter on the page ?

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE LETTER AS A WHOLE ?

To what extent is the letter likely to accomplish its purpose, obtain the desired response, and build good will ? In other words, how do you rate its *general effectiveness?* Underline the word which best expresses your rating:

OUTSTANDING · GOOD · PASSABLE · UNSATISFACTORY

IN RATING ANOTHER'S LETTER:

If the letter is "unsatisfactory," be sure to indicate the specific weaknesses which necessitate revision. Similarly, if the letter is only "passable," indicate clearly the weaknesses to which attention should be given in future letters.

SECTION 1

STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE LETTER WRITING*

A satisfactory letter is one that is:

COMPLETE
CONCISE
CLEAR
CORRECT
APPROPRIATE IN TONE
NEAT AND WELL SET UP

These letter standards are amplified and discussed in this section. The discussion will be built around the Letter Appraisal chart, shown on the opposite page, which has proved useful to letter writers seeking a means by which to measure the effectiveness of their letters. Persons who have used this device in their program for attaining increased letter writing skill report that it has helped them to form the habit of asking searching questions about their letters. They report that use of the chart has revealed to them their weaknesses and has shown them the directions in which to concentrate their efforts toward improvement. Supervisors have found that the Letter Appraisal chart helps them to review critically yet constructively letters prepared by subordinates and to indicate the specific weaknesses which necessitate revision.

Is the letter COMPLETE?

"Does this letter give all the information necessary to accomplish its purpose?" is a question which every correspondent should ask before he signs any letter. That every letter should be complete is obvious; that essential points are easily left out is indicated by the number of incomplete letters mailed each day. Incomplete letters not only cause additional correspondence; they also exasperate the addressee and give him reason to doubt the efficiency of the Department.

The following letter, replying to a very simple request, shows how essential information is often omitted:

> In response to your recent request we regret to inform you that circular M is not available for general distribution from the Washington office, but is circulated by local field offices.

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*The material in the ten sections of this manual has been adapted from "Writing Effective Government Letters," with permission of the copyright owner, Employee Training Publications, Inc.

The next letter (this man still wanted information) gave the inquirer the address of the local field office from which he could get a copy of the circular.

Another common variety of incompleteness is illustrated by the letter which asked that a report be resubmitted, stating that "the report submitted does not contain all the information required." Just what information was missing was not specified; therefore it was supplied only after further correspondence and consequent delay.

To assure completeness, analyze the incoming letter carefully, refer to appropriate files, organize your material, and plan your reply. Be sure to put yourself in the addressee's place and ask, from his point of view: Is this an adequate reply? Will he know what to do and how to do it? Are all his questions answered? In answering letters of inquiry, be on the lock-out for questions that are only implied or not clearly stated. By doing this and by anticipating further inquiries, you will reduce the number of letters to be exchanged on the subject. If you cannot answer one of several questions asked, say why you cannot; never omit reference to it.

Is the letter CONCISE?

Surveys have shown that the length of typical letters can be reduced by from thirty to sixty percent, and their effectiveness materially increased, if unessential facts and words are omitted. The cost of the average letter is estimated to be approximately 75 cents, so the extent of possible savings is apparent.

Scrutinize your letters to make sure, first, that you are not giving unnecessary information and, second, that you convey your message in the fewest words consistent with clearness, completeness, and courtesy.

Letters are frequently made overly long by repeating much of the incoming letter when no more than identification is needed. Substantial savings may be made merely by omitting obvious and superfluous statements such as, "We have received your letter," and in the opening sentence "This will acknowledge receipt of and thank you for your letter of March 14." A writer is merely warming up when he says, "Please be advised that," or "This is to inform you that." Writing verbosely--using, for example, "Attached hereto you will please find," when "Attached is" tells the whole story--is an expensive habit.

Be thrifty--not stingy--with words. Use all that are necessary to the purpose and tone of a letter, but use no more.

Is the letter CLEAR?

Every letter should be written not merely so that it can be understood, but so that it cannot be misunderstood. The confusion and additional correspondence caused by obscure expression demand that correspondents review every letter to make sure that it cannot be misunderstood.

The first essential of clearness is to understand the situation to be discussed. Know your subject; clear writing is impossible without clear thinking. Clearness depends also on your ability to project yourself into the place of the reader--to visualize his background concerning the subject of your letter. Clearness requires, finally, that you present the necessary facts in a simple and concise manner.

Letter writers who adjust their style to the reader's point of view do not, in writing to a layman, refer to cold fronts, pressure gradients and synoptic meteorology without full assurance that the addressee is familiar with meteorological terms. Nor do they say "precipitation occurred" when they mean that light rain fell. One correspondent confused the addressee by referring to the "penultimate paragraph of your letter" when the "third paragraph" would have conveyed the thought accurately and more clearly. The need for adapting the language of the letter to the vocabulary of the addressee is dramatically emphasized by the following pathetic reply to a letter written by one agency. This agency's letter had carried a subject line above the body and, in the text, had referred to "the above-captioned application."

> "I received yours of Sept. 27 saying that my Re application No. 48027 was captioned and I have not heard any more from it so I am asking you to please quote me at once who had it captioned and what was it captioned for write me of the details do not hide the matter from me any longer oblige yours as a farmer...."

The wrong use of words--for example, using "infer" when "imply" is meant--is a common cause of misunderstanding. Be sure that you know exactly what you want to say--then say it with words that express your exact shade of meaning.

Faulty sentence structure frequently causes muddiness. By following a few simple principles for constructing effective sentences, dictators can avoid confusing the readers with sentences like "Your letter of October 20 relative to Mr. Blank's application which I returned without comment received." In this case the dictator meant to say

"Mr. Blank's application, about which you wrote on October 20, was returned to you, without comment, on October 15."

The following letter, written by one agency to all its fieldmen, shows what can happen when sentence structure becomes twisted:

> "We are enclosing an employee efficiency rating form for Miss Joan Smith. As her immediate supervisor you are supposed to rate this employee, sign same in the lower right hand corner (back side) and return to this office for final approval."

The structure of the letter as a whole is important in obtaining clearness. The construction of paragraphs so that each is a complete thought unit, the arrangement of these paragraphs in a logical order, the placement of important ideas in prominent positions —all of these will help the reader understand your message at a glance.

Write simply and clearly so that there is no danger of getting a reply like that received by one agency: "Please tell me in one-syllable words just what you want me to do and I will be glad to do it."

Is the letter CORRECT?

Errors cause additional correspondence and lessen the respect of the addressee, and--most significant of all--misstatement of facts and statements made contrary to policy may cause damage.

Letters are a means of conveying ideas or thoughts. To do this correctly a man, regardless of his facility in letter writing, must know his business. The writer of correct letters is the man who knows the facts about which he writes.

To be sure that your letters are correct:

> Know your job.
>
> Read the incoming letter carefully.
>
> Make a practice of reviewing pertinent files.
>
> Never use lack of time as an excuse for not digging up all the facts. You will save time in the end by making sure.

Know what policies should guide your letter. If a policy regarding a significant subject has never been laid down, use the letter as a means of obtaining a clarifying statement.

Check every statement made.

Grammar, spelling, and punctuation, although they are subordinate to the content of the letter, should also be reviewed for correctness. There is no justification for errors in these things. They lessen the respect of the reader and divert his attention from the message. More important yet, they may cause actual misstatements. For example, observe the different meaning resulting from the misplacement of only one word:

These positions only will be filled through the Civil Service Commission.

These positions will be filled only through the Civil Service Commission.

Failure to read letters carefully before signing them often provides a note of humor, but this practice is unlikely to contribute to the dignity of the Department. One lawyer who used the term "subordination agreement" in dictating a large number of letters did not realize for some time that his stenographer had been typing "insubordination agreement." Another dictator signed a letter which read, "We waived the matter thoroughly before coming to our decision." The widow whose late husband was referred to as the "diseased" was probably not so amused as was the bachelor who was asked to state his "martial status." The farmer who was told, "We note that you plan to sow five acres of oaths this spring," probably did not wait until spring.

Is the letter APPROPRIATE IN TONE?

Tone refers not to what you say but to how you say it. This "how" may make friends for the Department or it may make enemies. "It isn't so much what he said but how he said it that makes me mad," is a common thought which illustrates well the effect of tone.

Before dictating decide what you will say, and then determine the tone that is appropriate to your message. The appropriate tone, depending on the letter, may be matter-of-fact, particularly friendly or informal, formal, convincing, persuasive, sympathetic, earnest, simple, insistent, regretful, grateful, or firm.

Put yourself in the place of the addressee and ask, "How will he feel when he reads this letter? Will it move him to the desired response?" Do your letters cause readers to react like this:

> That's a fair request; I'll do it now.
>
> That's the kind of agency I like to have dealings with.
>
> They couldn't give me what I wanted, but they were nice about it anyway.
>
> There's one government outfit, at least, that's efficient.

or like this:

> The parasites, who do they think are paying their salaries anyway?
>
> More government red-tape.
>
> I guess they can wait for what they want.

Appropriately toned letters get results. They also fulfill the public relations responsibility that every letter writer has.

A courteous tone is appropriate at all times. That courtesy is good business is indicated by the fact that the people of the United States pay more than ten million dollars a year in telegraph tolls to add the word "please" to their messages. Courtesy--used in the best sense of the word--is not incompatible with firmness and forcefulness.

The Department of Agriculture never becomes irritated with the people with whom it does business. As human beings, we may become angry, but it is never permissible for us to reply in kind to an unreasonable or offensive letter. As Abraham Lincoln advised, write in anger if you must, but be sure to mail the letter in the wastebasket.

The following excerpts from government letters illustrate how easily an inappropriate tone can creep in. These letters did not gain the desired response. A number of them caused, as might be expected, considerable trouble.

> Flatly contradictory: Mr. Brown, whom you recommended for appointment, is not qualified for the position.
>
> Insulting: It is our opinion that you are not qualified as an inspector.

Commanding: Wire city and county legal residence of William Bowen. Hereafter furnish this information in all cases.

Petulant and selfish: You have caused us a great deal of trouble by your failure to answer our letters.

Impertinent: Do you actually mean what you state in your last sentence?

Weak and apologetic: We regret the necessity of again calling your attention to this matter. ..... Thanking you to allow this important matter to cammand your immediate attention, we are.....

Arbitrary: We do not wish to offer you a loan. Your property is not an attractive proposition.

An easy choice: Unless we receive a substantial payment from you, or a letter advising why such payment cannot be made at this time, it will be necessary for us to take action to.....

Offensive: You misunderstood the statement in our letter of November 25.

Insincere and affected: I was so disappointed to find that your illness prevented my conferring with you. However, the joy that all were expressing about your improved condition helped make up for that disappointment.

Talking down: You will understand, after further thought, that we are not able.....

Grudging: We have to advise that you may defer this action.

Implied criticism: Your undated letter.....

Indifferent: Your letter was addressed to the wrong agency. We are not concerned with the matter of patents.

Implied doubt: You claim that you did not receive the certificate.

Tone is weakened also by the stock or stereotyped phrases which destroy naturalness and forcefulness or expression. The absurdity of this "business English," examples of which will be given in Section 3, is brought out by the correspondent who, upon being asked to say grace, is reported to have prayed as follows: "Dear Lord, We are in receipt of your kind favors of recent date and beg to thank you for same. Hoping to merit your continued courtesy, we remain."

Is the letter NEAT AND WELL SET UP?

Although the physical appearance of a letter is the primary responsibility of the typist, it should be remembered that the dictator approves appearances as well as content. The letter's physical qualities make the first impression--favorable or unfavorable. A letter with ugly erasures is the equivalent of an untidy personal representative.

Do not sign letters that are poorly proportioned, misplaced on the page, or are marred by strike-overs, uneven typing, or obvious erasures. Send them back, with helpful suggestions, to the typist.

Apply the standards discussed in this section to your own letters and to those of your subordinates.

NOTES

SECTION 2

PLANNING THE LETTER

Completeness, Conciseness, Clearness, Correctness, and Appropriate Tone will be attained only if the content and structure of each letter are planned.

Organize Your Material

Be sure that you know the exact purpose of a letter before you begin to dictate. Having clearly in mind what you wish to say will help to clarify and strengthen your letter.

Each letter has a definite objective. This objective may be to request or to give information; to win support for a new plan or a change in present procedure; or it may be to accomplish any one of a number of specific purposes. In every case, however, the primary purpose of a letter is to carry a message in such direct, simple, and convincing language that the desired result will be obtained.

Many letter writers find it helpful to jot down a brief outline of the letter, with each important topic expressed in a word or phrase. A written plan is, of course, merely a device to insure a well-organized letter and like any other means to an end it should be employed only when it serves a practical purpose. Writing a plan is particularly helpful during a period when a letter writer is examining his present methods to find specific ways to improve his letters.

If the plan of the letter is clear in the mind of the writer, only a minute or two are required to jot down the words or phrases which constitute a concise plan. If, on the contrary, the written plan proves to be unnecessarily long or shows an illogical sequence of ideas, the writer will save time by finding this out before he dictates or writes his letter.

For long or detailed letters a plan in writing minimizes the chances of omitting essential facts. It also minimizes the chances of including material not closely enough related to the subject and the purpose of the letter to justify its inclusion. Such unessential information usually gives the impression of rambling and diverts the attention of the addressee from important points. A further advantage of a written plan, which means much to a letter writer interested in simplifying the job of dictation, is that he is able to concentrate his full mental energies on each idea, developing it fully before going on to the next topic. He does not handicap himself by trying to carry in his mind a large number of topics, each

of which must be discussed in its proper order to insure a logical sequence of ideas. One letter writer, who without the aid of a written plan dictated a six and one-half page reply, found when his letter was reviewed by his supervisor that in the light of the addressee's problem 80 percent of the material in the reply was unnecessary. Not only did the proposed reply lack conciseness, but of even greater importance, it made no reference to the real problem of the addressee, a problem which was not stated expressly but was unquestionably implied in the incoming letter. To provide the necessary additional information one and one-half pages of material were added. The final reply, based on a written plan of 8 major topics and 23 subtopics, consisted of two and three-quarters pages.

Experience shows that the preparation of an outline compels careful organization of thought. Certainly no one should ever begin to dictate a letter until he has at least a mental plan—until, in other words, he knows the facts to be included in the letter and the order in which those facts should be arranged.

Direct your message to the interests of the addressee. In this respect letter writers of today can learn from Anthony Adverse, of whom it was said, "He always strove to see the men to whom the letters were addressed. He learned all he could about them from the captains who had dealt with him and from the files of correspondence in the vault." (p. 206)

Remember that the person to whom you are writing will judge the Department by the tone of your letter. Even a refusal of his request can be expressed in language that is tactful and friendly, as well as firm and definite. Be sure that your letter—in content and appearance—is a worthy representative of the agency you serve.

Structure of the Letter

An effective letter has unity; it deals with one subject. This subject is developed through a logical and easy-to-follow structure; each paragraph unit is related to the next. The effective letter also places emphasis where emphasis is needed.

Unity. A unified letter develops completely one thought. Unity in letters is served by formulating clearly the purpose of the letter before starting to dictate. This not only assures a complete letter, but also aids the writer to make, ordinarily in the first sentence or first paragraph, a clear statement of the theme of the letter.

Coherence. Coherence in a letter is that quality which makes all statements hang together. It is achieved by logical development of the letter's theme through connected paragraphs that are themselves thought units.

No formula for the "logical development" of letters can be given, inasmuch as each letter is a problem by itself. If we assume, however, that the correspondent is endowed with a logical mind, planning

the letter according to the suggestions made earlier in this section should assure presentation of ideas in a logical and effective order.

Emphasis. Certain paragraphs or ideas of any letter will automatically be emphasized even if no thought is given to placing emphasis. Paragraphs which are in prominent positions and paragraphs which are exceptionally long or exceptionally brief, even though they are of minor importance, will catch the reader's attention. In the preparation of even simple letters it is advisable, therefore, to give attention to placing emphasis where emphasis is appropriate.

Strong emphasis may be given to an important thought or paragraph by a number of methods:

1. By presenting the thought in a strikingly short paragraph which, by contrast, calls attention to itself. The emphasis and force of brevity is illustrated by a letter written by Lincoln to the Governor of Pennsylvania shortly before the War between the States. The letter read, "I think the necessity of being ready increases. Look to it."

2. By making the paragraph longer than others. It should be remembered, however, that long paragraphs slow up the tempo and are usually harder to follow. Generally, long paragraphs are to be avoided, although they are occasionally useful for purposes of emphasis.

3. By reiterating the thought, in different form, in additional paragraphs.

4. By placing the paragraph in a position of prominence—at the opening or closing of the letter. This, the most important principle of emphasis, is so honored in its neglect as to deserve special treatment.

Opening and Closing Paragraphs of the Letter

The opening and the closing of the letter are its strategic points; they give the first and final impressions and claim the reader's attention. Yet in practice these points are frequently devoted to details of minor importance.

The first paragraph, or better, the first sentence, should tell the reader at a glance what the letter is about. Ordinarily it should contain the kernel of the message, stated in terms appropriate to the tone of the letter. The letter should begin, when possible, with information of particular interest to the person to whom it is written. Action which is favorable to the addressee provides an excellent opening.

In business letters the first paragraph has another, but a subsidiary, function, that of referring to the date and subject of the previous letter.

Examine the following opening paragraph:

> Replying to your letter of March 15 with which you enclosed a report regarding the survey we are making of the Valley Project, we wish to advise that this report contains the information we shall need to complete our survey of this project.

The following revision gives the first position to matters of prime importance, subordinates the date reference, and omits the unessential observation that we are "replying." It is more effective.

> The report which you sent with your letter of March 15 contains the information we shall need to complete our survey of the Valley Project.

The practice of beginning every letter with an acknowledgment of the incoming letter frequently results in loss of strength and emphasis. As a general rule, strength may be gained readily by subordinating the reference to the incoming letter and by beginning the letter with information of interest to the addressee. There are cases, however, in which it is both convenient and desirable to include in the opening paragraph merely an acknowledgment of the incoming letter and an identification of the subject matter of that letter. Occasionally it is difficult to begin in any other way, and the effort to do so results only in lost time and in an artificial and labored opening. In these cases any one of a number of acknowledgment openings is appropriate. Among those frequently used are: "We have your letter," "This will acknowledge your letter," "We acknowledge your letter," "This is in reply to your letter," and "This refers to your letter."

Stilted and overformal openings such as "We are in receipt of your letter of March 11," "In reply to your letter of March 11, we wish to advise," and "Replying to your letter of March 11," should of course be avoided. In addition to being trite and awkward, the participial form (Replying to.... Referring to....) is frequently confusing, and even incorrect, as in the following example: "Replying to your letter of March 3, Mr. Smith said that he could not attend the meeting," means that the reply was made by Mr. Smith, and this of course was not the case.

The following opening paragraph illustrates what happened in one case when the common and wasteful practice of repeating or paraphrasing the incoming letter was carried to its logical conclusion:

> We have your letter of May 23 and note that you have a loan on your home; that your husband obtained a loan which is held by the Blank Corporation; that you have had poor eyesight

and your husband has had neuritis; that you have had business difficulties; that your husband has been unable to pay the loan and is being pressed for payment; and that you are renting your home to tourists to make a living.

The preferred practice of the Department regarding the reference to incoming letters was stated by Mr. Paul H. Appleby, Assistant to the Secretary, in the "Memorandum for Officers Preparing Correspondence," which was issued on October 14, 1939: "Incoming letters should not be paraphrased at length. Usually the subject of the incoming letter can be identified in a line or two."

The following examples may serve to illustrate how opening paragraphs may be made more effective:

We are in receipt of your letter of June 19 enclosing your annual report for which we thank you.	Thank you for the annual report which accompanied your letter of June 19.
Your letter of February 27 which apparently crossed with our letter of February 28, has been received, and we appreciate the suggestions made therein.	We appreciate the suggestions in your letter of February 27, which apparently crossed ours of February 28.
This refers to your letter of December 18. I want to thank you very much for the information that you have given me and wish to state that it is quite likely within the next several months I shall pay a visit to New Orleans....	Thank you very much for the information in your letter of December 18. It is quite likely that within the next few months I shall visit New Orleans....

The <u>closing</u> paragraph, because it leaves the final impression, is the other strategic point in the letter. Its function is to summarize the central thought, especially if the letter is a long one, and to indicate clearly the action which the addressee should take. Its tone is of particular importance, because the closing paragraph should reinforce the previous statements in the letter and should stimulate the addressee to act as the writer wishes him to act. If, for example, the matter discussed is an urgent one, the final paragraph should carry a tone of urgency.

The participial closing, such as "Assuring you that we shall appreciate your giving us this information at your earliest convenience, we are," is both trite and weak. The same thought may be expressed more effectively in a direct statement such as, "We shall appreciate your giving us this information as soon as possible." Other familiar closings which are utterly unfit for the job of ending a letter include the following:

Awaiting your reply, I remain
Trusting that I may hear from you at an early date, I remain
Thanking you, we are
Trusting that this is satisfactory, we are
Please advise and oblige

To occupy the prominent and effective closing position, an idea should be important and should be expressed with strength.

Paragraphing for Clearness and Emphasis

Detailed discussion of this subject, including methods of constructing effective paragraphs and illustrations of various types of paragraphs, will be given in Section 6.

Analysis of Letters

A critical analysis of letters—your own and those of others—will indicate the opportunities for improvement through better methods of planning and will aid you in future dictation. As an illustration of the results of such analysis, let us review a letter prepared in the Washington office to inform a regional manager of the changes which he should make in his report. Following is the draft submitted to the supervisor for signature:

> Reference is made to your report forwarded to this office under date of January 3.
>
> This report is perfectly satisfactory except for a few discrepancies, list of which is enclosed. It is requested that you make the proper corrections on this list and return same to this office as soon as possible.
>
> Thanking you in advance for your cooperation in this matter, we are

With the exception of the inconsistent statement in paragraph 2, sentence 1 ("perfectly satisfactory except for a few discrepancies"), this letter is not seriously objectionable. The opportunities for increased directness and simplicity, however, are strikingly illustrated by comparison of the first draft with the following revision, which omits the stilted language and begins with information concerning the report submitted by the regional manager.

> The report which you sent us on January 3 is satisfactory, with the exception of the few discrepancies shown on the attached list.
>
> Please make the proper corrections on this list and return it to us as soon as possible.

The plan of this revision included two major points or topics which might be expressed in very brief form as follows:

1. Report satisfactory except
2. Corrected list

Apply this method of analysis to a few of the letters which you dictated during the past week or ten days. Does each letter show logical organization of facts? In the light of the suggestions in this section, what changes would you make in those letters?

NOTES

SECTION 3

THE LANGUAGE OF THE LETTER

A letter is essentially a substitute for a personal interview, and therefore the same language that would be appropriate in a conversation with the addressee should be used in a typewritten message to him. In fact, a good letter may be defined as one in which we "talk" to the addressee in simple, easily understood, and courteous language. The style of conversation, however, should be that of a careful speaker who selects his words with discrimination and expresses his thoughts with clearness and dignity.

Many otherwise effective letters fail to fulfill their purpose because of their language. Obsolete phrases that were appropriate for another generation now amuse the reader and distract his attention from the message. Hackneyed expressions sap the life from the message and instead of moving the addressee to action lull him to sleep. Pompous, high-hat phraseology is annoying, while the use of many technical terms and complex words serves only to baffle the reader. Some words are dangerous to use; they are likely to antagonize or irritate. Inexact and slovenly use of words not only makes a poor impression but also leads to misunderstanding. Perhaps the most common weakness of language in letters, however, is the use of too much of it. Even simple, easily understood words may confuse the reader when ten are used where only five are needed.

Obsolete Phrases or "Hoop Skirts"

Many correspondents are still addicted to formal, stilted, and obsolete phrases which, together with Old Dobbin and hoop skirts, were in vogue over a generation ago. Typical of these "hoop skirts," as they have been called, is "Replying to yours of the 24th instant (or ultimo), we wish to advise that...." The addressee's letter becomes, "Your favor of the 15th has come to hand." "Kindly (or please) be advised that" usually precedes simple and otherwise complete statements such as, "Your application should be sent directly to the Office of Personnel." Or the final impression--the closing of the letter--is weakened by a participial ending, familiar examples of which are "Thanking you, we are," and "Trusting that this is the information you desire, we remain."

Part of the crop of common "hoop skirts" yielded by government correspondence is shown below. The square is placed before each phrase so that you may conveniently mark for oblivion those to which you may be addicted.

☐ Your letter was duly received....
(Just how a letter is "duly" received has never been explained.)

☐ We beg to advise that....
(We don't have to beg.)

☐ As of even date herewith....
(Merely give the date.)

☐ Your letter of the 15th instant--ultimo--proximo....
(The addressee, and perhaps even the dictator, will be less confused if the month is named.)

☐ I beg to hand you herewith....
(This would require a long reach.)

☐ You will please find attached hereto....
(Simply "Attached is.")

☐ As per statement attached hereto....
("In accordance with the attached statement" or "As shown by the attached statement" is a better way of expressing the thought.)

☐ We are in receipt of....
(This expression, while acceptable in highly formal letters or reports, sounds stilted in general correspondence; "We have received" or "We have" is better.)

☐ We have your kind favor of....
(We had received a letter, not a favor; the letter itself probably was not "kind.")

☐ To your favor of the 2nd instant, making inquiry with respect to the above named William Brown, I respond as next hereinafter set forth....
(On your mark, get set, go!)

☐ Please find same enclosed herewith....
(The addressee should be able to find it without such detailed directions.)

☐ Trusting that this will answer your kind inquiry satisfactorily, we beg to remain,
(If our reply has been carefully prepared, we need not depend on faith, nor need we beg to remain.)

☐ Thanking you in advance for your cooperation in this matter, we are
(Unnecessary and, in the opinion of some, presumptuous.)

☐ And oblige,
(Weak, like participial endings.)

These illustrations may serve a useful purpose in emphasizing the extent to which many correspondents are influenced by a style of expression popular in the Early Eighties when the writing of a business letter was a ceremony performed with quill pen and powdered sand. A correspondent in those days prided himself on his Spencerian script, and wrote his letters with a flourish, usually concluding with "I am, dear sir, your most humble and obedient servant." Typical of such methods was the practice of a Holland merchant who was accustomed to end his letters with the following, "Sugar" (the commodity was changed as prices fluctuated) "is falling more and more each day but not so the respect and esteem with which I remain, your faithful servant."

The chief objection to the use of these outworn, affected phrases is that they weaken the clarity and power of the letter. It is a basic requirement of effective letter writing that the mind of the reader should be allowed to proceed from the salutation to the signature without interruption. Phraseology is part of the form of a letter, and a good writer subordinates the form to the message. Language that clarifies and strengthens the effect we wish to produce should be used. Obsolete phrases have surely reached the retirement age; having long been overworked, they deserve a permanent rest.

Other Overworked Stereotyped Phrases

Closely related to the affected "hoop skirts" carried over from past generations are a great number of deadweight phrases which by constant repetition have lost all originality and sparkle and have come to be known as "bromides." Whatever they are called, these trite, stereotyped expressions detract from the clarity and power of letters and reduce their effectiveness. While "hoop skirts" may amuse the reader, "bromides" merely put him to sleep. Here are a few examples:

☐ The contents of your letter have been carefully noted....
(We read all incoming letters carefully.)

☐ For your information....
(Usually superfluous.)

☐ This will acknowledge receipt of your letter....
(If we answer his letter, he will know that it was received.)

☐ By return mail....
(Ho hum.)

☐ We wish to advise that....
(Omit the windup; he'll be interested in the advice, or better still, the information you send him.)

☐ Please be advised that....
(Another unnecessary windup.)

☐ We returned same to Mr. B.
(Use "it" for singular reference; "them" for plural reference.)

"Stuffed Shirts"

The wish to have the pompous, silk-hatted gentleman slip on a banana peel is almost universal; readers feel the same way about correspondents who write in a pompous, high-hat style. Pretentiousness not only robs letters of sincerity and naturalness, but it also creates antagonism toward the writer and the institution he represents. Some correspondents adopt a style of this kind because they believe it adds dignity to their letters, not realizing that the essence of dignity is simplicity. Correspondents who are themselves far from ostentatious have merely become habituated to using high-sounding phrases in their letters. As one correspondent put it, "I've always thought that in your letters you were supposed to use a style of language different from that used in talking."

Do your letters sound like "stuffed shirts"? Read some of them aloud and see! Here are a few common examples:

☐ I have the matter under advisement.
(Harumpff!)

☐ I have before me your letter of....
(Ahem! The addressee is interested in your reply, not in the exact position of his letter.)

☐ The writer wishes to state....
(In government letters the institutional "we" should ordinarily be used. If the dictator wishes to express his personal opinion, he should use "I" instead of an indirect and pompous expression, such as "the writer.")

☐ You are advised that the Congress has specified....
(Ordinarily the information, or advice if the writer considers "advise" appropriate, constitutes an adequate reply without the preamble "You are advised.")

☐ You are directed....
(The "army style" is usually inappropriate.)

☐ You will send....

☐ You are informed that....

Technical Terms

Certain expressions are peculiar to each profession or business and may be used in communications between members of the same group. For example, it is correct and even advisable for an attorney to use technical terms in a letter to another member of the legal profession. Similarly, a statistician will understand the statement, "The correlation between the two variables is inverse." To meteorologists such terms as "lapse-rate," "reduced pressure," "radiosonde," and "adiabatic" are compact ways of conveying specific and complex meanings in one or two words, and their use in letters or reports between technicians is recommended. To the average layman, however, a "vertical profile" suggests only an erect photograph, perhaps of a famous actor; "cold front" carries an impression not unlike that of "cold shoulder"; "fronto-genesis" is susceptible of misinterpretation; and "air mass analysis" sounds well but means little or nothing.

The term "photosynthesis," which is included in the Glossary of Terms used in a number of Federal agencies, is a familiar word in the vocabulary of botanists. But the readers of a "popular" magazine were doubtless puzzled when they read the statement, "Chlorophyll makes food by photosynthesis." This illustration was cited by Charles F. Kettering, Vice-President of General Motors Corporation, when he stressed the importance of having scientists speak the language of those to whom they wished to communicate their findings. Kettering went on to say: "If we translate the Greek roots into English, the sentence reads, 'Green leaves build up food with the help of light.' Anyone can understand that."

Other expressions, to mention only a few, which should be used with discrimination in letters prepared for readers outside the Weather Bureau, are: micro-climatology, winds aloft, pilot-balloon, dynamic meteorology, water equivalent, cooperative substation, storage, moist tongue, over-run, recurve, and dew-point. If we are not sure the addressee knows these terms, descriptive or explanatory equivalents should be used.

Unusual and Unnecessarily Long Words

Unusual or complex words are in a class with special technical terms, if the language of the letter is to be adapted to the vocabulary of the addressee. We are more likely to be understood if we write "I shall try to find out the facts" in place of "I shall endeavor to ascertain the data"; or if we write "after a careful

review of all the facts in the case" instead of "after a comprehensive and thorough appraisal of all the circumstances pertaining to your case." The danger of using long and unusual words is illustrated by the instance in which the addressee, upon being told, "We shall hold the matter in abeyance for 30 days," replied: "If you will give me a little more of that abeyance, I am sure I can have the papers ready."

Simple, easily understood words should be used whenever they express the thought accurately. A message in words of one or two syllables not only is clearer; it takes on added strength because of its simplicity.

Dangerous Words

The tone of a letter depends to a large extent upon the choice of words and phrases. Frequently, a single word may suggest to the addressee that it is not the writer's sincere desire to assist him, as in the following sentence:

> We found no information not previously considered which would cause us to change our former decision.

Substitute "enable" for "cause" and the tone of the letter is greatly improved. Similarly, "We do not wish to offer you a position" might better be written "We are unable to offer you a position," or in some cases "We regret that we are unable to offer you a position."

Expressions such as, "you state," "you claim," "you say," are usually undesirable because they imply doubt. Likewise, "your complaint," "your error," "your misunderstanding," "your neglect," "your failure," and similar phrases weaken the tone of a letter because they convey an unfavorable or unpleasant suggestion.

Frequently the purpose for which a letter or message is written, when considered with all the circumstances which form the background of the case, demands a strong word. For this reason, the fifth standard in our Letter Appraisal chart was expressed as follows: "Is the letter appropriate in tone? Is the tone calculated to bring about the desired response?"

The word "suggest" is an excellent conciliator; it is used appropriately in much of our correspondence. Sometimes it accomplishes the purpose of the letter when "request" or "demand" would antagonize the addressee and delay, if not prevent, the satisfactory outcome of the negotiations. In some cases, however, "suggest" lacks the necessary strength. An outstanding example of the different degrees of emphasis conveyed by the words "suggest" and "request" is the correspondence between the United States and Japan regarding

the bombing of the Panay. Following is a reprint from the Washington News of December 15, 1937:

> President Roosevelt, taking personal charge of the grave crisis in American-Japanese relations, made sure that his demands would go over the heads of the Japanese civilian government and the war lords who run it by instructing that his views be communicated to the emperor.
>
> Yesterday, Secretary Hull was instructed to hand Ambassador Saito, who had called at the State Department to offer his government's apologies for the Panay disaster, a memorandum stating:
>
>> "That the President is deeply shocked and concerned by the news of the indiscriminate bombing of American and other non-Chinese vessels on the Yangtse, and that he requests that the emperor be so advised."
>
> Photostatic copies of the President's memorandum of instructions to Hull were given out, on White House instructions.
>
> These revealed that the typewritten text of the first paragraph had been changed by Roosevelt from "he suggests that the Emperor be so advised" to "he requests...."

Vague and Inexact Expression

Both the clearness and the correctness of letters are reduced by the use of words which do not exactly express the thought. Careless or uninformed choice of words causes numerous misunderstandings and much unnecessary correspondence. Even when the inaccurate expression is not actually misleading, incorrect word choice may give the addressee a poor impression of the letter writer and of his agency.

A great deal of inexact expression results from the habitual use of "omnibus words"--those having so many meanings that the precise thought is often not clear. The person who is asked, for example, "to handle" a certain situation may be at a loss to know precisely what action is requested. If he is expected to make a decision as to the appropriate action and to act in accordance with his decision, a general term such as "handle" (act upon, direct, manage, control, deal with) may be used. If, on the contrary, as is usually the case, a specific action is intended, a word which more exactly describes this action should be used. It is, therefore, the indiscriminate use of such words that is objectionable.

Other common "omnibus words," together with words that may more exactly express the thought, follow:

☐ Matter	question, problem, topic, material, delay, business, affair, works, controversy ("Matter" is frequently responsible for a vague request in the closing paragraph, a position which demands unmistakable clarity and definiteness. Instead of "we shall appreciate your giving this matter your attention," say "we shall appreciate your signing and returning this application.")
☐ Note	see, observe, notice (The "we note's" in our letters usually evidence lack of conciseness. For suggestions regarding opening paragraphs and methods of identifying the subject matter of incoming letters, see Section 2.)
☐ In this <u>line</u> Along this <u>line</u>	in, on, of this kind, in this respect
☐ Interesting	There are scores of words which might be used in place of "interesting" to describe our reactions more exactly. For example, we may refer to a constructive letter, a delightful trip, a keen-minded man, an absorbing job, a diverting game, or thought-provoking speech. "Interesting" has suffered greatly and lost much of its expressiveness as a result of its overuse. The monotony that such overuse produces is illustrated by the following opening paragraph of a letter from an officer of a large corporation to an official of a government agency. "I was glad to have your interesting letter of October 20. I am very much interested in the new developments which you plan. The members of our organization consider it one of the most interesting projects yet undertaken."
☐ Nice	"Nice" is used even more frequently than "interesting" to describe a great variety of objects. For example, an official of a government agency recently received the following letter: "It was nice of you to come to Blank City to address our group. The members considered your talk very

nice. We think it would be nice if you would come back to talk at one of our meetings next year." A few of the words which in appropriate situations will give greater definiteness and life to our expression include: agreeable, pleasing, congenial, delightful, good, kind, considerate, particular, exacting.

Many common, everyday words are perhaps more frequently used incorrectly than are unusual words. Writers have an idea of the general meaning of the word but have not ascertained the specific, exact meaning. Inasmuch as lists of frequently misused words are given in most books on English usage, it is necessary to cite only a few examples of words often used incorrectly by government correspondents.

Advise	This is a good word meaning to give advice or counsel; "advise" is often used when "tell" or "inform" would be more appropriate.
Party	This means "person" only when used in a legal sense.
Balance	Often confused with "remainder."

Misuse of the word "same" is a common fault resulting in vague and puzzling expression, as in the following excerpt:

> I will thank you to have checks made to pay for the materials, forwarding <u>same</u> to me, at which time I will turn <u>same</u> over to the parties furnishing the <u>same</u> and taking their receipt for the <u>same</u>. After which I will forward the <u>same</u> to the department.

<u>Too Many Words</u>

Increased clearness and force of expression are gained by the elimination of wordiness. Even simple words hamper understanding and waste time when too many are used. Several examples of wordiness, together with illustrations of the same thoughts stated more concisely, follow:

Wordy	More concise
I will be obliged if you will please send....	Please send
At the present time....	At present
Attached you will please find....	Attached is
Attached there is sent to you for your information and guidance a copy of the letter....	A copy of the letter is attached. ("For your information" is frequently unnecessary.)
A check in the amount of $100	A check for $100

As was pointed out in Section 1, another compelling reason for making our letters concise is the financial saving which results from economy of words. Daniel Webster's advice, "Spend words as though they were dollars," should appeal to the letter writer as strongly as to the budget officer.

The Language of Your Letters

Gaining facility in the use of clear, forceful, and fresh language requires, first, a searching and critical examination of one's language habits and, then, hard work directed toward building a more effective vocabulary. Review a sufficient number of letters you have written to discover their language weaknesses, and list in the left-hand column, called "The Black List," the expressions which detract from the effectiveness of your letters. If these are expressions for which superior substitutes should be found, revise them in the right-hand column headed "Better." The suggestions given in the following section, "Building a Vocabulary," should be helpful in preparing your revisions.

The two examples illustrate the method of localizing your bad language habits and of expressing the same thought accurately and concisely in language appropriate to the present day.

The Black List	Better
Please be advised that we have read your report with great interest and we consider it an excellent analysis of this important question.	We consider your report an excellent analysis of this important question.

We are holding the matter in abeyance until the affidavit has been received.

We shall take action as soon as we receive the affidavit.

or

We shall be glad to take appropriate action as soon as we receive the affidavit requested in our letter of March 15.

SECTION 4

BUILDING A VOCABULARY

Words are the tools of expression, and a skilled craftsman masters the tools with which he works. The degree of mastery is a measure of his skill. By words properly grouped, a definite effect is produced upon the mind of the reader, and the desired response is obtained.

Disraeli paid tribute to the power of words when he said: "With words we govern men." Letter writers, paraphrasing Disraeli's statement, may say: "With words we explain--we interpret--we convince--we move others to action."

Poverty of language is a handicap for which a correspondent must accept personal responsibility. By diligent use of a dictionary, a person may build a mental storehouse of synonyms and antonyms which will give him a choice of words and enable him to express the exact shade of meaning he intends to convey. Many correspondents make it a practice to master a given number of words each week, thus adding strength and flexibility to their expression. In fact, those who probe deeply into the origin, history, and definitions of words usually find this study a profitable and absorbing hobby.

A man's command of words is a measure of his mental stature. Or as Alexander Hamilton expressed it: "The selection of the right word calls for the exercise of man's greatest faculty--that of judgment."

Value of Synonyms

The language poverty of some correspondents is indicated by their repeated use of the same word in a letter. In one 14-line letter the word "advise" was used six times, when the correspondent actually meant to "inform, notify, or tell"; not to give "counsel or advice." Similarly, the words "send" or, in some cases, "return" might be used in place of "furnish" or "forward" to avoid overworking these words in the same letter.

A correspondent might profitably study the different shades of meaning expressed by the synonyms of certain words which he uses frequently, and even at times misuses. When, for example, should "maintained" be used instead of "said"? Under what conditions would "claimed" be more appropriate than "said"? Observe the different effects produced when such words are used in place of "said" in the following sentence:

He said (maintained, claimed) that some stenographers were unwilling to cooperate with their supervisor.

Likewise, an entirely different thought is conveyed when the proper form of any of the following words is substituted for "said"; declare, suppose, imply, assume, presume, aver, imagine, assert, believe, suspect, think, feel, insist, and suggest.

"Get" and its past form "got" are greatly overworked words, although the dictionary lists numerous synonyms which will add distinctiveness, clarity, and vigor to the conversations and letters of those willing to devote the time and effort necessary to acquire a command of these words. If the following synonyms of "get" are not part of your speaking vocabulary, it will be worth your while to practice their correct use until you can employ them with ease and fluency: acquire, gain, earn, obtain, secure, achieve, win, attain, receive, procure. Do "imply" and "infer" puzzle you? Or "affect" and "effect"? "Ingenious" and "ingenuous"? "Adverse" and "averse"? "Accept" and "except"? "Apt," "likely," and "liable"?

Mastery of the various uses of these and other words will suggest the range and scope of expression possible to a discriminating correspondent.

Methods of Vocabulary Building

Although there probably is no one best way of vocabulary building, many correspondents have found the following suggestions helpful in discarding outworn expressions and acquiring a more effective, forceful, and precise vocabulary.

Form the habit of scrutinizing every word to be sure you know its exact meaning. Be particularly careful not to overlook those that you have seen and perhaps used many times. Jot down the words about which you are doubtful and at the first opportunity consult a good dictionary. Unless you have a remarkable memory, it is wise to make a written record of each word, its pronunciation, definition, origin, and synonyms. The more information you collect about a word, the more likely you will be to remember it.

Be systematic. Set a quota of the number of words you will master each week; stick to it. Review the words at convenient intervals and--most important of all--use them at every appropriate opportunity. Only after repeated use will a word come automatically to your tongue when needed.

Use discrimination in the words which you add to your vocabulary; many are so technical, complex, or rare that they are unsuited for

ordinary use. Words are not learned for their own sake, but for the purpose of building a vocabulary that will enable you to express your thoughts readily and with increased clearness, vigor, and exactness.

Do not use four-syllable words to express an idea that is as well expressed by a one-syllable word; do not add to your working business vocabulary archaic or unusual foreign words and phrases.

Form the dictionary habit--to discover the exact meaning of words with which you are already acquainted and to discover the meaning of useful words which you have not used before.

Your Vocabulary

The words listed below provide a start in your vocabulary building program. In your speaking and writing, do you employ these "tools" with precision and ease? You are undoubtedly familiar with all these words, but are you sure of their exact meaning?

Write your definition of each word, an example of its use in a phrase or sentence, and a few synonyms and antonyms. When you look up a word in the dictionary, be sure to observe its pronunciation and its origin. Add your problem words to this list and use them in your conversation and letters until you have mastered them.

Accept	Aggravate	Adverse
Except	Heighten	Averse
	Irritate	
	Magnify	
Accurate	Provoke	Affect
Correct		Effect
Exact		
Precise	Cite	
Nice	Sight	Device
	Site	Devise
Advise		
Counsel	Cheap	Diction
Inform	Inexpensive	Phraseology
Notify	Tawdry	Style
Say		Vocabulary
Tell		
	Complement	
	Implement	Disinterested
	Supplement	Uninterested

Almost
Most

Answer
Rejoinder
Reply
Response

Appreciate
Estimate
Evaluate

Apt
Liable
Likely

Ask
Demand
Inquire
Request
Suggest

Assume
Presume

Assumption
Inference

Assure
Insure

Balance
Rest

Complementary
Complimentary

Complicated
Complex
Intricate
Involved

Converse
Inverse
Reverse

Council
Counsel

Credible
Creditable
Credulous

Curtail
Liquidate
Reimburse
Repay

Deed
Mortgage

Deprecate
Depreciate

Derogatory
Favorable

Effective
Effectual
Efficient
Proficient

Elicit
Illicit

Eligible
Legible

Eminent
Imminent

Exceptional
Exceptionable
Objectionable

Fewer
Less
Smaller

Farther
Further

Formally
Formerly

Finish
Complete

Get
Achieve
Acquire
Attain
Earn
Gain
Obtain
Procure
Receive
Secure
Win

Healthful
Healthy

Hoard
Horde

Imply
Infer

Ingenious
Ingenuous

Invest
Spend

Lean
Lien

Negotiate
Transact

Occasion
Opportunity
Event

Offer
Proposal
Proposition
Commitment

Purpose
Propose

Occur
Happen
Transpire

Personal
Personnel

Practical
Practicable

Possible
Probable

Principal
Principle

Respectably
Respectively
Respectfully

Say
Assert
Claim
Declare
Maintain
State
Suppose

Terminate
Separate

Therefor
Therefore

Unique
Odd
Peculiar

NOTES

SECTION 5

CONSTRUCTING EFFECTIVE SENTENCES

In the important work of writing letters in accordance with the policies and procedures of our bureau, as well as of the Department as a whole, we have a responsibility to keep our letters free of all obscurity, double meaning, incoherence, faulty or inadequate emphasis, dullness, and other weaknesses resulting from careless or inexpert construction of sentences.

Clear Thinking Precedes Clear Expression

One of the most obvious weaknesses of letters, both in government and in private business, is the manner in which words are put together to form sentences. Almost everyone knows enough words to make himself understood, but many who command large and useful vocabularies continually baffle and confuse their readers when they arrange these words in sentences. The dictators of the following sentences, for example, were suffering not so much from inadequate vocabularies as from inability to group their words effectively:

> The comptroller approves payments in accordance only with the relevant laws, and if the laws are not specific he must assume responsibility for the legality of them and, consequently, he issues interpretations of law that are normally final decisions, that is in practice.
>
> In regard to the date when I was to call at your office it was to be the 20th of this month but everything will be in soon and if they fail to send them in at once let me hear from you and I will see why they have not.
>
> The repayment record can be considered as a binding figure, but when delivered to reliable processers forms also an established ability to produce, and with a feasible plan which can be worked out within established ability to repay, the application did not look out of reason.

If the writers of these sentences had clearly in mind the ideas they wished to express and the logical sequence and relationship of those ideas, their sentences would evidence the clarity of their thoughts and the reader would not have to grope for the intended meaning. To avoid fuzzy expression, it is essential that the sentence be regarded as a vehicle for conveying thought understandably. Or perhaps we should say that the meaning of a good sentence not merely can be understood, but it cannot be misunderstood.

The suggestions for constructing effective sentences which are presented in this section are based on thorough study of the difficulties which adult men and women have in thinking on paper. Attention to these suggestions at a time when they are to be applied to the practical job of writing better letters should result in rapid improvement.

Avoid Long, Rambling, Shapeless Sentences

The long sprawling sentences in which ideas are indiscriminately piled on top of one another are always evidence of failure to think in an orderly, clear-cut manner. The best cure for this baffling type of sentence is to take a little time, before dictating, to formulate what we want to say. And in many cases it is necessary only to get into the habit of using periods more frequently.

Even though a sentence is structurally logical and correct it may be too long to be readily grasped. In such a case it is wise to divide the material into two or more sentences. Lest you lose your breath and the reader his patience, avoid this type of sentence:

Too Long	Better
If you recall, at the time we submitted these maps we indicated that we were also preparing a report on the tax status of farm land in that State, and in addition we indicated that we would gladly review your report in order that you might have our assurance of the correct interpretation of our tax maps, however, our report has been unfortunately delayed, and we have decided to include the information in another report on a related subject and consequently we shall be unable to make our report on this material available as soon as we had anticipated.	If you recall, at the time we submitted these maps we indicated that we were also preparing a report on the tax status of farm land in that State. In addition, we indicated that we would gladly review your report in order that you might have our assurance of the correct interpretation of our tax maps. Unfortunately, however, our report has been delayed and therefore we have decided to include the information in another report on a related subject. Consequently we shall be unable to make our report on this material available as soon as we had anticipated.

Thrifty, Yes, but Not Stingy with Words

In their zeal to correct one weakness, some letter writers actually reduce their effectiveness. They fail to maintain an appropriate balance and a broad perspective. For example, having been impressed

with the desirability of conciseness, and in a strained effort to be concise and businesslike, they dictate telegraphic sentences that are both curt and hard to follow. These "sentences" require the reader to supply the missing words:

> Letter of August 29 received.
> Replying to your letter of March 15.
> Suggest additional information be sent.

The omission of necessary words frequently leads to confusion. For example, "The decision was made by the secretary and treasurer," means that the decision was made by one man holding the positions of secretary and treasurer. Actually, however, the decision was made by two men. The insertion of "the" before "treasurer" would have conveyed the meaning accurately.

Of course, each sentence must express a whole idea--in fact, that's what a sentence is. The reader expects to find a complete thought in each sentence and therefore is confused when an essential part is omitted. Fragments like the following are obviously incomplete thoughts: "Referring to your letter of November 5"; "Whereas Mr. Blank's statement dealt with the purpose of the agreement."

One Thing at a Time

By nature, the human mind understands more quickly when it receives only one idea at a time; by training, it expects to find only one main idea in a sentence. The reader is confused, therefore, when we include in one sentence ideas which have no obvious relation to each other, like this:

> Mr. T. T. Brown was given the assignment and he is an experienced conference leader.

When the two ideas are really separate, and together do not constitute a larger thought, each idea should be placed in a separate sentence. What usually happens, however, is this: The dictator really has in mind one main idea--not two unrelated ideas--but the structure of his sentence fails to let the reader in on the secret. In the case of the sentence cited just above, the facts that Mr. Brown was given the assignment and that he is an experienced conference leader are really related closely enough to be included in the same sentence. What the dictator had in mind could be expressed as follows:

> Mr. T. T. Brown, who is an experienced conference leader, was given the assignment.

or

Because he was an experienced conference leader, Mr. T. T. Brown was given the assignment.

Show the Relation between Thoughts

Clear expression demands that the intended relation between thoughts be unmistakably shown. The dictator should guide the reader by indicating through sentence structure that two ideas are equal, that they are being compared or contrasted, that one is subordinate to the other, that one is the cause or the result of the other, that one expresses a condition or a concession, or that an adverse idea is about to be expressed.

Much confusion in letters results from the failure to show that one idea is subordinate to another. A compound sentence, indicating equality of two clauses, is incorrectly used when the two thoughts expressed in the sentence are not logically equal. The following sentence is faulty in this respect:

Weak	Less Important Idea Subordinated
We have a limited appropriation for that purpose and we are unable to comply with your request.	Because of our limited appropriation for that purpose, we are unable to comply with your request.

Correspondents sometimes mislead their readers by placing the main thought in a subordinate position, rather than in the main clause, like this:

Weak	Better
We requested him to formulate a work plan for the survey, which he did.	He formulated a work plan for the survey, as we had requested. (The significant idea is that he formulated a work plan, not that we asked him to do so.)

The relative importance of ideas is not the only relationship to be shown if you are to assist the reader to an immediate understanding of your message. The connectives used between clauses indicate relationship; they should be chosen with discrimination. Connectives are of two kinds, coordinating and subordinating. Coordinating connectives (and, moreover, but, and yet, or, therefore, for example) join equal thoughts and enable you to express ideas of addition, contrast, alternation, consequence, or explanation. Similarly, the subordinating connectives (although, because, since, when, where, as, who, if) enable you to show clearly and accurately the relationship of ideas. When these connectives are confused, meaning is confused.

Review of Department letters suggests the desirability of emphasizing three warnings regarding the use of connectives:

1. Never use "and" to express an adverse idea. Use "but," "and yet," or "yet." Or subordinate the less important ideas, introducing the subordinate clause with a connective such as "although."

Wrong	Better
He wrote two letters <u>and</u> failed to get a response.	He wrote two letters, <u>but</u> failed to get a response. or Although he wrote two letters, he did not receive a reply.

2. Do not use "but" when no adverse idea is expressed.

Wrong	Better
One of the best economists on our staff is John Smith, <u>but</u> <u>who</u> is only 26 years old.	One of the best economists on our staff is John Smith, <u>who</u> is only 26 years old.

3. Do not join one idea to another by "and" unless the ideas are logically equal.

Wrong	Better
We are enclosing the form <u>and</u> ask that you sign it.	Please sign the form which is enclosed. or Please sign the enclosed form.

<u>Watch Your Word Order</u>

Clearness and correctness demand that the words of a sentence be arranged so that there can be no doubt of the exact meaning intended.

Much obscurity in letters can be avoided by using care:

1. To place modifiers next to the words they modify

Confused	Better
His cooperative appointment only would be for that period.	His cooperative appointment would be for that period only.
He is only responsible for two counties.	He is responsible for only two counties.

2. To fit together logically and grammatically related words and ideas.

Confused	Better
We shall appreciate it if you will supply the information on crop, livestock, and range conditions in the county in which your association is located as outlined below.	We shall appreciate it if you will supply information, ~~on~~ as outlined below, regarding crop, livestock, and range conditions in the county in which your association is located.

3. To connect action unmistakably with the agent of that action.

Confused	Better
After investigating the facts in the case, the applicant was given a complete explanation.	After investigating the facts in the case, we gave the applicant a complete explanation.

Avoid Shifts in Construction

Confusion results from failure to express logically parallel thoughts in grammatically parallel constructions. If you express the first of two or more parallel thoughts with an infinitive, a participle, a clause, or a phrase, express the remaining thoughts in the same form. Maintain a single logical point of view; avoid inconsistent shifts in subject or voice, and in number, person, or tense.

Not like this	Like this
It is the policy of this bureau to direct and develop all phases of its work with a view to furthering the basic aims of the Department of Agriculture, which include stability of farm income, conservation of basic resources, greater security of tenure, and efficient production and distribution; to	It is the policy of this bureau to direct and develop all phases of its work with a view to furthering the basic aims of the Department of Agriculture, which include stability of farm income, conservation of basic resources, greater security of tenure, and efficient production and distribution; to

cooperate with the general planning agency of the Department and to key its various activities to the over-all plans and programs developed by the planning agency; and it shall cooperate with other bureaus of the Department in order to give unity and coordination to the work of the Department as a whole.	cooperate with the general planning agency of the Department and to key its various activities to the over-all plans and programs developed by the planning agency; and to cooperate with other bureaus of the Department in order to give unity and coordination to the work of the Department as a whole.
Only those persons with satisfactory experience and education and who have passed the examination for the position of blank officer are admitted to the training school.	Only those persons who have satisfactory experience and education and who have passed the examination for the position of blank officer are admitted to the training school.
A number of employees will be required to work on Saturday afternoon, in which event you will be given compensatory time off.	A number of employees will be required to work on Saturday afternoon. They will be given compensatory time off.

Vary your sentences

To increase interest and to add emphasis to a letter, vary the use of different types of sentences. Any one type of sentence used to excess will make a letter monotonous. A series of simple sentences is jerky and disconnected; the rigidity of excessive coordination is no more pleasant than the up-and-down motion of continuous subordination.

Men speak and write naturally with what are known as "loose" sentences. In a loose sentence a complete thought--although not the entire thought of the sentence--can be obtained before the end of the sentence. Usually the loose sentence can be divided into two or more sentences, as in the following example:

> We have made a thorough study of the entire situation and we are convinced that the findings of the Committee will have a far-reaching effect upon the development of our program and we therefore urge the widest possible distribution of the published report.
>
> (We have made a thorough study of the entire situation. We are convinced that the findings of the Committee will have a far-reaching effect upon the development of our

program. We therefore urge the widest possible distribution of the published report.)

Used continuously, loose sentences give the impression of scattered ideas or jottings. They are rarely emphatic.

For variety or emphasis, it is often desirable to construct sentences so that the full and complete meaning is withheld until the end, or nearly the end, is reached. In this type of sentence, the subordinate clause precedes the main clause; the cause precedes the effect. The loose sentence cited above may be reconstructed as follows:

> In view of the fact that the findings of the Committee will, we are convinced, have a far-reaching effect upon the development of our program, we urge the widest possible distribution of the published report.

This method of building toward a climax was admirably employed by President Roosevelt in his address to the Congress of the United States on January 3, 1940, when he said:

> While the number of unemployed has decreased, while their immediate needs for food and clothing--as far as the Federal Government is concerned--have been largely met, while their morale has been kept alive by giving them useful public work, we have not yet found a way to employ the surplus of our labor which the efficiency of our industrial processes has created.

A word of caution should be given regarding the use of sentences of this type. Since they are not the usual order of speaking or writing, their overuse gives the impression of stiffness and artificiality.

The balanced sentence may be used occasionally to gain emphasis, although it also is somewhat artificial and should be used with caution. The balanced sentence is divided into two parts, equal in length and importance and similar in construction. Ordinarily it has two independent clauses placed in contrast to each other. For example:

> The more quickly you return the corrected application, the sooner your application will be acted upon.

Don't Hide Important Ideas

Place the important idea of a sentence at the beginning or the end--where it will get attention.

Not like this	Like this
Replying to your letter of March 16 regarding a farm record study, we wish to advise that the study has been sent to the State Land Grant College-BAE Committee.	The farm record study, about which you inquired on March 16, has been sent to the State Land Grant College-BAE Committee.

Unimportant modifiers should, whenever possible, be "tucked in" where they will not command attention.

Not like this	Like this
However, we shall expect to receive your affidavit within ten days.	We shall expect, however, to receive your affidavit within ten days.

If you wish to emphasize an idea, be sure to put it in the main clause of a sentence; relegate less important ideas to subordinate clauses. In the following sentence the fact that Mr. Warner was appointed to the position is stressed:

> Mr. Warner, who is an experienced investigator, was appointed to the position.

If it is desired to emphasize Mr. Warner's experience, the sentence should be written as follows:

> Mr. Warner, who was appointed to the position, is an experienced investigator.

The reader depends on you to show what is subsidiary and what is important. To cause the reader to hunt for the meat of a message is irritating; to mislead by faulty emphasis is costly.

The bases of good sentence structure may be simply summarized: completeness and unity of thought, clearness of thought, and appropriate emphasis.

Your Sentence Structure

To find your specific sentence structure weaknesses, review carbon copies of a number of letters which you have dictated within the past week. Critically analyze the sentences in terms of the following questions:

> Are your sentences too long for the meaning to be readily grasped?

Are they close-knit or do they ramble on with too many "and's and "but's"?

Are they complicated and involved?

Are they complete and not telegraphic?

Do they show clearly the relation between two or more ideas?

Is the main idea always in the main clause?

Are modifiers placed so that there can be no doubt as to which words they modify?

Are the words placed in a logical order?

Are logically parallel ideas expressed in grammatically parallel constructions.

Is there sufficient variation in the types of sentence structure to insure sustained interest and appropriate emphasis?

NOTES

SECTION 6

PARAGRAPHING FOR CLEARNESS AND EMPHASIS

Because early printers found that a solid page of text was uninteresting and difficult to follow, they devised the paragraph to supply a resting place for the reader's eyes and thoughts. Today the paragraph still has that mechanical use; but more important, it is a structural unit composed of a sentence or group of sentences all dealing with a central thought.

Clearness in letters is served by the development of paragraphs which are unified, are coherently constructed, and employ appropriate emphasis.

The Paragraph Is a Thought Unit

The reader expects that a paragraph will convey one principal thought; that all sentences of the paragraph will bear on this one thought, developing it fully; and that no ideas foreign to the main thought will be included. The physical unit of typed material prepares him to find there a thought unit. To present in paragraph form sentences which do not all contribute to the development of one principal idea is to confuse the reader.

The central thought of a paragraph is frequently expressed in one sentence, called the topic sentence. The topic sentence, which usually opens the paragraph but sometimes closes it, tells the reader what the paragraph as a whole is about. While the topic sentence is not needed when the central thought of a paragraph is obvious, as a general rule the expression of that central thought in a topic sentence will prove a valuable aid to quick and easy reading.

METHODS OF CONSTRUCTING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

Development of the paragraph proceeds from a clearly conceived central thought. This principal thought may be expanded by (1) facts, particulars, or details; (2) specific instances or concrete examples; (3) reasons--cause or effect; (4) comparison or contrast; (5) repetition--reiterating a central thought in different form. Examples of these methods of developing paragraphs follow.

1. Facts, particulars, or details.

> "Farmers derive many benefits from the provisions of this act. Some of the specific benefits are...."

2. Specific instances or concrete examples.

"Experience has shown that not only can soil erosion be controlled by the use of practical farm measures which the average farmer can apply in the course of his everyday farm operations, but in addition social and economic conditions on millions of farms can be improved by this kind of work. For example, near Muskogee in eastern Oklahoma the Soil Conservation Service has worked since 1936 with 211 farmers. At the time the Muskogee Project was started, most of the farmers...."

3. Reasons--cause or effect.

"We are unable to grant your request because of several conditions. The law provides...."

Or first tell the reasons why it is impossible to grant the request; then close with the topic sentence, "For these reasons we are unable to grant your request."

4. Comparison or contrast.

"Agriculture today is comparatively prosperous when we consider conditions in 1931. At that time...."

5. Repetition.

"Now is the time to improve our letter writing ability. Now we can begin to analyze our methods and to eliminate our weaknesses. Now we can...."

Strive for Coherence within the Paragraph

Coherence requires that the sentences of a paragraph follow in a logical and natural order and that the reader be enabled instantly to perceive the connection between each sentence or idea and the next.

The logical connection between sentences may be made clear to the reader in three ways: (1) repeating important words; (2) using pronouns; (3) using link words and phrases.

The first device for gaining coherence is to repeat important words which join one sentence to the next, in this manner:

We shall be glad to notify him that his report has been referred to the chief of the division. The report....

Similarly useful for increasing coherence are personal pronouns (he, it, she, they) and demonstrative pronouns (these, those, this, that, the former, the latter). To illustrate:

> In cooperation with farmers, agricultural experiment stations, and county officials, activities were devoted to analyzing the place of such measures as rural zoning, cooperative grazing legislation, and policies relating to tax-delinquent lands in accomplishing various objectives of a land use program. These social tools with which State and local people, working as a group, may control and protect individuals and the public from unwise land use have proved to be most effective.

The English language is rich in "connectives," or link words and phrases, which enable the writer to pass smoothly and easily to a new thought and to show its relationship to the preceding thought. The following selection of connectives should remind you of many others. They are useful aids to coherence, but in the interests of conciseness they should be used only when necessary.

although	at least	accordingly
yet	especially	consequently
nevertheless	besides	surely
in contrast to	moreover	certainly
for example	furthermore	in fact
for instance	hence	finally
specifically	therefore	in this way
conversely	similarly	in addition

Placing Emphasis

The ideas present in a paragraph are usually of unequal importance and therefore require varying emphasis. Attention may be called to an idea by (1) giving it prominent position, (2) giving it more space, or (3) repeating it in a number of forms.

The most effective of these ways of placing emphasis is to give important ideas positions of prominence. The beginning and the end of a paragraph are positions of special emphasis--excellent positions for significant and central ideas.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PARAGRAPHING

1. A one-paragraph letter:

> I shall reserve February 5, the date mentioned in your letter of January 3, for my talk at the annual meeting of the Association of Agricultural Workers. The information regarding those

who will be in attendance will be helpful in planning my talk, and I appreciate your suggestions as to subjects for discussion. I am sure that the thirty minutes which you have allotted me will be adequate. Please title my talk "A Planned Program to Increase Farm Income and Conserve Basic Resources." I am very glad to have this opportunity to meet with the members of your association.

In this letter clearness and emphasis are lost because of the lack of proper paragraphing. Indiscriminate paragraphing, as illustrated in the following letter, has a similar result.

2. Coherence and emphasis lost by series of one-sentence paragraphs:

I shall reserve February 5, the date mentioned in your letter of January 3, for my talk at the annual meeting of the Association of Agricultural Workers.

The information regarding those who will be in attendance will be helpful in planning my talk, and I appreciate your suggestions as to subjects for discussion.

I am sure that the thirty minutes which you have allotted me will be adequate.

Please title my talk "A Planned Program to Increase Farm Income and Conserve Basic Resources."

I am very glad to have this opportunity to meet with the members of your association.

As suggested in Section 2, emphasis may be given to an important idea by presenting it in a strikingly short paragraph. When this practice is carried to an extreme, however, it defeats its purpose since "all emphasis becomes no emphasis." Obviously the practice of using a series of one-sentence paragraphs throughout a letter, as illustrated in the letter reprinted above, does not indicate to the reader the relative importance of our ideas. This practice also results in a disconnected, jerky tone.

Suggested revision:

I shall reserve February 5, the date mentioned in your letter of January 3 for my talk at the annual meeting of the Association of Agricultural Workers.

The information regarding those who will be in attendance will be helpful in planning my talk, and I appreciate your suggestions as to subjects for discussion. I am sure that the thirty

minutes which you have allotted me will be adequate. Please title my talk "A Planned Program to Increase Farm Income and Conserve Basic Resources."

I am very glad to have this opportunity to meet with the members of your association.

3. Letter illustrating inadequate planning:

Facts in this case: In a letter dated May 12 Miss A, the General Chairman of the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World, invited the Blank Agency (1) to prepare an exhibit for the conference, and also (2) to be "at home" to delegates from foreign countries on Tuesday, June 2, and to delegates from the United States on Thursday, June 11. Miss A enclosed a tentative program which included the following:

June 2 - "At home" by Blank Agency for delegates from foreign countries
June 4 - Visits to Government agencies and public buildings
June 11 - "At home" by Blank Agency for delegates from the United States

A detailed analysis of Miss A's letter follows:

1. Announcement of conference of Associated Country Women of the World
2. Statement that reservations had already been made by 1,500 rural women from 20 nations
3. Invitation to prepare exhibit for the conference
4. Invitation to be "at home" on Tuesday, June 2 and Thursday, June 11
5. Offer to indicate to Chief, or to person or persons designated by him, amount of space available for exhibit
6. Offer to confer further regarding plans for the "at home" and the exhibit

Proposed reply to Miss A:

I have your letter of May 12 in which you call my attention to the fact that the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World will be held here in Washington, June 1 to June 12.

I appreciate your invitation to prepare an exhibit on the work of our agency and your suggestion that officials of our agency be "at home" to members of the conference on June 2 and June 11. I assure you that we will be happy to comply

with your suggestions. I understand that Mr. X of our Information Division has already called your office in regard to the space available for an exhibit. We would like very much to have an estimate from you as to the probable number of people that will visit us on the two days mentioned and will be glad to have any suggestions that you may have in regard to just how these "at homes" should be handled. I note in your letter that you mention June 2 as the date for one of these meetings, while it appears on the tentative program as June 4. I trust that Tuesday, June 2 is the date that you have in mind.

Assuring you that we appreciate this opportunity to cooperate with you, I am

The proposed reply to Miss A illustrates lack of planning in several respects. Miss A's letter had been referred to the Information Division for preparation of a reply accepting the invitation and designating a representative to be responsible for arrangements regarding the agency's participation in the conference. Since there was no immediate urgency, Mr. X should have postponed his telephone call until the letter designating him as representative had been received by Miss A. The reference to the date of the "at home" for delegates from foreign countries indicates that Mr. X had not read the tentative program carefully; in both the letter and the program June 2 is listed as the date. His failure to plan properly led to his tactless statement "I trust that Tuesday, June 2 is the date that you have in mind."

The plan of the reply to Miss A is comparatively simple: acceptance, with pleasure, of the invitation; designation of Mr. X as our representative; and assurance that Mr. X will be gald to cooperate with Miss A in helping to make the conference a success. In accordance with this plan the invitation should be accepted in the first sentence instead of in the <u>third</u> sentence, as in the proposed reply reprinted above.

Additional weaknesses, besides those illustrating lack of planning, include: the repeated expression of our appreciation, culminating in the trite participial ending "Assuring you that we appreciate this opportunity to cooperate with you, I am"; the loose use of words in "an estimate of the probable number"; and the confusing change from "I" to "we" and back to "I." "We" and "I" may, of course, be used in the same letter, provided they are used accurately and the reference is clear. It is the inconsistent or confusing interchange of these words that is objectionable.

The weaknesses of the proposed reply are emphasized by contrast with the following revisions. Revision No. 1 is based upon the assumption that Mr. X has already telephoned Miss A's office and also that it was advisable to include a request for the probable number of persons who would attend the "at homes." Revision No. 2 follows the plan of designating Mr. X as the representative and of giving him responsibility for making all arrangements regarding the exhibit and the "at homes."

Revision No. 1

It will be a pleasure to comply with the suggestions in your letter of May 12 with reference to the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

I have asked Mr. X of our Information Division to represent our agency in making arrangements concerning our participation. He tells me that he has already telephoned your office in regard to the space available for this exhibit.

We shall also be glad to be "at home" to members of the conference on June 2 and June 11, and to explain to them the activities of our agency. If you can let us know the approximate number of persons who plan to visit us on each of the days mentioned, it will be very helpful.

We shall welcome any other suggestions regarding the conduct of those "at homes" or the material which you feel should be included in our exhibit.

Revision No. 2

We are pleased to accept your invitation of May 12 to participate in the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

Mr. X of our Information Division will represent this agency in making arrangements regarding the exhibit and the "at homes." He will be glad to have your suggestions and to cooperate with you and your committee in helping to make this important conference an outstanding success.

YOUR METHODS OF PARAGRAPHING AND LETTER PLANNING

1. Review several of the letters you dictated recently. Select the topic sentence for each paragraph. If the topic sentence is not expressed, see whether the central thought of the paragraph can be written in one sentence. Perhaps two paragraphs may be needed to indicate the logical thought units.

2. The arrangement of our ideas—the plan of the letter, logical or otherwise—is evidenced by paragraphing. Examine your letters to see whether the sequence of ideas leads logically to your conclusion. Will the addressee be convinced of the soundness of your position? Is the need for more careful planning of your letters indicated?

3. Analyze the methods you have used in a letter of refusal. Is the letter likely to produce a more favorable impression if the explanation precedes the statement of refusal; in other words, if the topic sentence is placed at the end of the paragraph rather than at the beginning?

SECTION 7

CORRECT USAGE

Grammatical errors, misspellings, and misleading punctuation are objectionable in a business letter chiefly because they divert the addressee's attention from the message or thought and consequently weaken the effectiveness of the letter.

While it is true that a letter may accomplish its purpose in spite of minor weaknesses which may be unnoticed or ignored by those to whom we write, more serious errors, principally those resulting from incorrect word use or misleading punctuation, may alter our meaning completely. For example, the use of "now" in place of "not," a typographical error which was not observed by the typist or the signer of the letter, constituted an approval of a request which the writer had intended to refuse. Similarly the use of "eligible" instead of "ineligible" nullified an agreement which in other respects was a logical and accurate interpretation of the law. In a number of cases court decisions of far-reaching influence have been based on incorrect punctuation or spelling.

Some errors which have amused or irritated the recipients of the letters are listed in Section 1. Other errors of this type include: blinding agreement (binding agreement); bonified (bona fide); lean (lien); ex-patriot (expatriate). In the letter of transmittal to the President printed at the beginning of the annual report of one government agency, the word "respectively" was used as the complimentary close. These and similar errors due to carelessness lessen the addressee's respect for an agency's standards of thoroughness and accuracy.

To keep the addressee's attention focused on our message from the opening statement to the closing sentence—a primary requisite of effective letter writing—it is important that our letters be free from all violations of correct usage.

Grammar

The test on pages 57-60 is intended to illustrate the major problems of correct usage. One advantage of this type of test is that the decision regarding the grammatical correctness of each sentence is based upon the same review made in appraising either your own letters or those submitted to you for approval.

After you have completed this test, turn to pages 61-64 for the correct answers. For a statement of the grammatical rules which

apply to these sentences, consult the reference books listed in Section 10. "Self-Aids in the Essentials of Grammatical Usage" by Dr. L. J. O'Rourke, is particularly helpful to those who desire compact statements of the rules of grammar, together with a number of sentences illustrating these rules. The numerous drills or practice exercises enable a person to eliminate his weaknesses by concentrating on the constructions which cause him difficulty.

Spelling

To spell English words correctly is difficult for many of us. This difficulty results partly from the large number of homonyms—words which, although pronounced alike, differ in meaning and usually in spelling. As examples we might cite a few of the more common homonyms: To, too, two; through, threw; in, inn; counsel, council; capital, capitol; correspondence, correspondents; stationery, stationary; cite, sight, site; principal, principle. The fact that English words are not spelled phonetically—according to their sound—complicates the problem still further. Consider the confusion of the foreign-born student who, in his attempt to learn English, finds that the ending "ough" is pronounced differently in each of the following words: Through, enough, plough, trough. Even the oft-quoted pair, "believe—receive," still puzzles many writers, although most of us have solved this problem by a guide word such as "Celia" of "lice." Such a guide word serves to remind us that in almost every case "l" is followed by "i" and "c" by "e."

In spite of the difficulties peculiar to the spelling of English words, writers can become reasonably proficient by applying the following suggestions:

1. Localize your problem words. Make a list of the words you misspell. Add your "doubtful" words—those which you may spell correctly, but with some misgiving.

2. Form the habit of seeing each word in your mind's eye. Many expert spellers find it necessary to have a mental picture of most words, syllable by syllable, before they spell them; before they are satisfied of the correct spelling of unusually difficult words, they must see them on paper. An excellent explanation of this method is given in "Words As They Look" by George W. Conklin. In the foreword to this little visualized speller, Dr. M. V. O'Shea of the University of Wisconsin explains the psychological principles involved in the spelling of words in the English language.

3. Be sure of the correct pronunciation of words. Incorrect pronunciation frequently results in the omission of letters and even syllables. One man who omitted "al" in "incidentally"

pronounced the word as though it were "incidently." Similarly the incorrect spelling, "evidentally," was due to faulty pronunciation. J. C. Fernald in his "Expressive English" tells of the dispute between two men regarding the spelling of "economics." One man insisted it was "equinomics"; the other, "equenomics." When they were unable to find either spelling in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, they condemned the dictionary as an unwise investment.

4. Consult a standard dictionary when in doubt. For government agencies Webster's New International Dictionary is the accepted authority (see the Style Manual of the United States Government Printing Office). When you look up a word, observe the pronunciation and the order of words when two or more forms are correct. For example, "enclose," placed first, is the preferred spelling, although "inclose" is also listed as correct. The section entitled "Orthography" on page LXXIX of Webster's New International Dictionary contains a condensed yet complete statement of the major problems of spelling, together with a number of rules and guides for correct spelling.

Punctuation

A speaker punctuates his message with pauses, gestures, and changes of voice; a writer accomplishes the same purpose by the intelligent use of commas, semicolons, periods, colons, parentheses, and the other marks of punctuation. The object of both speaker and writer is the same: to convey thoughts clearly and effectively.

Writers who punctuate intelligently develop what might be called a sense for placing the proper marks to indicate short pauses in thought, abrupt stops, and parenthetical comments, as well as points of special emphasis. Frequently the correct use of these aids to clearness and more forceful expression depends on the writer's good judgment rather than on his ability to recall certain rules. For example, a comma is ordinarily not placed after a short introductory clause, as in the sentence: "While he was here we discussed that question." In the following sentence, however, a comma should be used to aid the reader to understand the meaning without rereading the sentence: "While he was dictating, a letter was delivered to him."

If you familiarize yourself with the purposes and general uses of punctuation marks, you will rarely find it necessary, when writing, to remember the rules or to consult a reference book. A statement of these purposes and general uses will be found in the Style Manual of the United States Government Printing Office and in the other books listed under the heading "Correct Usage" in Section 10.

An excellent method of acquiring skill in the use of punctuation marks is to observe carefully the practices of publishers of well-printed books and magazines. As you read, notice how the appropriate "stop and go" signals bring out the thought more clearly and more forcefully. Without proper punctuation it would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact meaning which the writer intended to convey.

In business communications it is especially important that the reader be able to grasp the meaning at first glance. Punctuation which puzzles the reader and requires a second reading of the sentence may weaken a letter fully as much as involved sentence structure or the use of misleading phrases.

NOTES

PROBLEMS OF CORRECT USAGE

The 50 sentences in this review have been selected to illustrate the principal problems of correct usage. Some of these sentences are correct; others contain grammatical errors. Underscore the word or words which are grammatically incorrect, and write the correct form in the space opposite the sentence.

1. He asked me to submit a list of several persons whom I thought were qualified to fill the position mentioned by you. _____

2. Special sheets of paper for currency printing is moistened to increase absorption qualities. _____

3. For the Norwegian people insult has been added to injury by the charges that defection in the military services or outright treachery in governmental offices were largely responsible for the initial ease with which Germany occupied the Capital and other key positions in Norway. _____

4. The staff has voted to hold their next meeting on March 15. _____

5. The data which you requested in your letter of January 10 is not available for distribution at this time. _____

6. These letters cannot be answered today except the staff works overtime. _____

7. It's report, as approved by the chief, was circulated to the members of the staff. _____

8. He felt keenly the humiliation he had suffered. _____

9. He discussed that problem with Mr. Smith and I yesterday. _____

10. Since neither of these sections were filled in, we assumed that you were not interested in this information. _____

11. A copy of your letter as well as copies of the bills and memoranda are being forwarded today to the state director, who will take no action until he has discussed this question with you. _____

12. The reason for his high rating was because he had done excellent work. _____

13. I will send it to whomever is entitled to it. _____

14. The correspondents had strove conscientiously to improve their letters. _____

15. Neither the chief nor his assistants were consulted before the appointment was made. _____

16. Whom do you think you will meet? _____

17. If I was living in Philadelphia, I should be glad to attend the meeting. _____

18. The secretary and treasurer were reelected. _____

19. Your efforts to meet this requirement is appreciated. _____

20. I can't hardly believe that those conditions are unsatisfactory. _____

21. The report showed that that division was doing very good. _____

22. That committee has failed because their members were not conscientious. _____

23. The food did not taste well. _____

24. I cannot explain Arthur resigning his position at this time. _____

25. The committee's report doesn't look like it did before. _____

26. He don't approve these recommendations. _____

27. The supervisor agreed to transfer Miss Smith to the Information Division provided another stenographer like her could be obtained. _____

28. Although we sent a messenger to the infirmary for him, he just lay there and refused to come. _____

29. Most all the employees in that division will attend the meeting. _____

30. The supervisor wouldn't leave me go until I had typed all the letters. _____

31. He introduced Mr. Brown, whom he asserted to be the most skillful correspondent in that department. _____

32. We do not employ men who act like they know everything. _____

33. We believe that this rule doesn't apply to you and I. _____

34. The problem was designed to better equip capable employees for more responsible positions. _____

35. One-seventh of the employees were absent. _____

36. If anybody wants to come, why not let them? _____

37. A large number of visitors come to Washington each month. _____

38. When the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers had overflown their banks, the Red Cross appealed for contributions to assist those in distress. _____

39. My report had lain on that desk for three weeks. _____

40. He insisted that the rejection of his loan application was not in conformity with the wishes of the President, whom he had heard say that farmers should be assisted in keeping their farms. _____

41. The judge sentenced the prisoner to be hung on March 15. _____

42. Every administrative assistant, personnel officer, and training director is invited to attend the conference. _____

43. None of these questions were answered in his letter. _____

44. One-third of the land was cultivable. _____

45. His work was no different than the work of the other clerks. _____

46. The number of visitors on Friday was 70. _____

47. When the shortage was discovered, we couldn't decide who to accuse. _____

48. He gave the assignment to whoever was available. _____

49. Please sign the enclosed application and return same to us. _____

50. The correspondent felt bad because his letters were not approved. _____

NOTES

ANSWERS TO PROBLEMS OF CORRECT USAGE

1.	He asked me to submit a list of several persons whom I thought were qualified to fill the position mentioned by you.	who
2.	Special sheets of paper for currency printing is moistened to increase absorption qualities.	are
3.	For the Norwegian people insult has been added to injury by the charges that defection in the military service or outright treachery in governmental offices were largely responsible for the initial ease with which Germany occupied the Capital and other key positions in Norway.	was
4.	The staff has voted to hold their next meeting on March 15.	its
5.	The data which you requested in your letter of January 10 is not available for distribution at this time.	are
6.	These letters cannot be answered today except the staff works overtime.	unless
7.	It's report, as approved by the chief, was circulated to the members of the staff.	its
8.	He felt keenly the humiliation he had suffered.	
9.	He discussed that problem with Mr. Smith and I yesterday.	me
10.	Since neither of these sections were filled in, we assumed that you were not interested in this information.	was
11.	A copy of your letter as well as copies of the bills and memoranda are being forwarded today to the state director, who will take no action until he has discussed this question with you.	is
12.	The reason for his high rating was because he had done excellent work.	that
13.	I will send it to whomever is entitled to it.	whoever

14.	The correspondents had strove conscientiously to improve their letters.	striven
15.	Neither the chief nor his assistants were consulted before the appointment was made.	
16.	Whom do you think you will meet?	
17.	If I was living in Philadelphia, I should be glad to attend the meeting.	were
18.	The secretary and treasurer were reelected.	was
19.	Your efforts to meet this requirement is appreciated.	are
20.	I can't hardly believe that those conditions are unsatisfactory.	can
21.	The report showed that that division was doing very good.	well
22.	That committee has failed because their members were not conscientious.	its
23.	The food did not taste well.	good
24.	I cannot explain Arthur resigning his position at this time.	Arthur's
25.	The committee's report doesn't look like it did before.	as
26.	He don't approve these recommendations.	doesn't
27.	The supervisor agreed to transfer Miss Smith to the Information Division provided another stenographer like her could be obtained.	
28.	Although we sent a messenger to the infirmary for him, he just lay there and refused to come.	
29.	Most all the employees in that division will attend the meeting.	almost

30. The supervisor wouldn't leave me go until I had typed all the letters. _____ let _____

31. He introduced Mr. Brown, whom he asserted to be the most skillful correspondent in that department. _____ _____

32. We do not employ men who act like they know everything. _____ as if _____

33. We believe that this rule doesn't apply to you and I. _____ me _____

34. The problem was designed to better equip capable employees for more responsible positions. a/ _____ _____

a/ Practical yet discriminating writers find that it is necessary under certain circumstances to split infinitives, in order to convey their thought with emphasis and clearness. Even the most conventional purist must agree that any of the following revisions of sentence 34 would be ambiguous and artificial:

1. The program was designed better to equip capable employees for more responsible positions.

2. The program was designed to equip better capable employees for more responsible positions.

3. The program was designed to equip capable employees better for more responsible positions.

4. The program was designed to equip capable employees for more responsible positions better.

Other examples of acceptable split infinitives include: "He was unable to completely understand all the provisions of the new act." "To thoroughly master travel regulations requires careful study." "He strove to further strengthen the training program of his agency."

If splitting an infinitive will add to the clearness, naturalness, or force of your statement, by all means split it (and if some purist objects, refer him to the authorities listed in Section 10).

35. One-seventh of the employees were absent. _____

36. If anybody wants to come, why not let them? him

37. A large number of visitors come to Washington each month. _____

38. When the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers had overflown their banks, the Red Cross appealed for contributions to assist those in distress. overflowed

39. My report had lain on that desk for three weeks. _____

40. He insisted that the rejection of his loan application was not in conformity with the wishes of the President, whom he had heard say that farmers should be assisted in keeping their farms. _____

41. The judge sentenced the prisoner to be hung on March 15. hanged

42. Every administrative assistant, personnel officer, and training director is invited to attend the conference. _____

43. None of these questions were answered in his letter. b/ _____

b/ In Webster's New International Dictionary, "none" is defined as follows:

1. Not any. As subject, "none" with a plural verb is the commoner construction.

2. No one; not one, nobody.

3. Not any such thing or person; as, "half a loaf is better than none."

The singular form "was answered" is, therefore, also correct. The form used depends upon the preference of the writer. For a discussion of letter revisions based on personal preference, see Section 9 entitled "Training and Supervision of Letter Writers."

44. One-third of the land was cultivable. _____

45. His work was no different <u>than</u> the work of the other clerks. from

46. The number of visitors on Friday was 70. _____

47. When the shortage was discovered, we couldn't decide <u>who</u> to accuse. whom

48. He gave the assignment to whoever was available. _____

49. Please sign the enclosed application and return <u>same</u> to us. it

50. The correspondent felt bad because his letters were not approved. <u>c/</u> _____

<u>c/</u> The adjective "bad," while grammatically correct in this construction, may properly be condemned as poor diction. A specific term, such as "disappointed," "upset," or "unhappy," would add measurably to the clarity and forcefulness of our statement. For a discussion of word choice, see Sections 3 and 4 entitled "The Language of the Letter" and "Building a Vocabulary."

NOTES

SECTION 8

FOUR AIDS TO EFFECTIVE EXPRESSION

To develop fluency in expression and to acquire skill in writing business letters and reports:

1. Form the dictionary habit. Have your own copy of a standard dictionary (preferably an unabridged dictionary) and look up all unfamiliar words. Use these words in sentences. Build up a mental storehouse of synonyms and antonyms so that you will have a choice of words and can select the particular one which best expresses the exact shade of meaning you intend to convey to your reader. Master at least ten words a week.

2. Read good business literature. Magazine articles by noted business leaders and writers constitute excellent material for analysis. Observe the choice of words, the sentence structure, and the arrangement of ideas in each paragraph. Study the letters, speeches, and essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Benjamin Franklin, William Dean Howells, Lord Chesterfield, Charles Lamb, Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, Elbert Hubbard, Bruce Barton, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This list might be expanded indefinitely to include other acknowledged masters of clear and forceful expression.

3. Study the methods of other writers and profit by their suggestions as outlined in a handbook of business correspondence. For a selected list of reference books intended to aid adults in writing more effective business letters and reports, see the list, "Useful Books for Letter Writers," given in Section 10.

4. Remember that the ability to write is developed as the result of much practice. Write often. Do not be discouraged if at first progress seems slow and difficult; at least ninety-nine per cent of those who learn to write must master the rudiments and devote years of painstaking effort to eliminating the "rough spots" before they become really proficient. Regard every letter you write as an opportunity to increase your skill.

NOTES

SECTION 9

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION OF LETTER WRITERS

Every supervisor, whether he is chief of a division or of a small unit, is responsible for the quality of the letters prepared by the employees reporting to him. It is his responsibility to be sure that they correctly interpret policies and procedures in letters which are complete, concise, clear, and appropriate in tone.

Supervisor's Job to Train Letter Writers

This responsibility for the quality of letters written by subordinates implies another responsibility. It implies that the supervisor must train his men to write increasingly effective letters. He must see to it that his men know how to write satisfactory letters, for he cannot afford to rewrite their letters for them. He cannot do their jobs and his own too, and do them all well.

Although this manual should be of assistance, it can not in any way take the place of supervisors' own efforts to improve the quality of letters prepared by their subordinates. Lasting results can be obtained only by the supervisor who requires that satisfactory standards be maintained, who is able to demonstrate good letter writing practices, and who helps his men to become increasingly expert. The attainment of skill in conducting through correspondence the business of any government agency requires prolonged practice under the day-to-day guidance of the supervisor.

The continuing training of letter writers is, then, the responsibility of individual supervisors. The suggested best methods for fulfilling this responsibility, which are presented in this section, are a product of the experience and thinking of many officials and supervisors.

Understanding between Chief and Subordinates

To establish the right relationship between letter writers and their supervisors, it is essential first of all that there be a clear understanding by the supervisor and his subordinates regarding the standards by which a letter is judged acceptable. As a means to this end, the Letter Appraisal chart, which raises specific questions about each letter, has been provided. The supervisor is responsible for making clear to his men the qualities a letter must possess in order to be approved.

The supervisor is also responsible for setting satisfactory yet practicable standards. The letters he approves must be creditable representatives of his agency. Many supervisors find, however, that they must guard themselves against the tendency to disapprove letters that contain only minor weaknesses, such as awkward style or wordiness which does not interfere with clarity.

Avoid Rewriting Another's Letter

The practice of rewriting a subordinate's unsatisfactory letters deprives him of the opportunity to learn to write better letters. This is one reason why letters should, as a general rule, be referred to the original dictator for revision.

It may seem easier, at the time, to rewrite an unsatisfactory letter prepared by a subordinate. As one supervisor said, "I have too much to do as it is, so I do not often have time to go over my men's letters with them. It's a great deal easier for me to rewrite their letters than to try to get my ideas into their heads." This man's burden would be lightened if he were to give his men an opportunity to learn to write letters which he would not have to rewrite. Incidentally, the lack of initiative on the part of his men, about which this supervisor complains, probably results, at least in part, from his methods of supervision.

Saving Time

Many supervisors, according to their own testimony, have been able to reduce by from fifty to eighty per cent the time taken in reviewing letters prepared by subordinates. They did this by helping their men to correct their mistakes and by stimulating them to improvement. Whenever possible, they avoided rewriting letters, and when it did become necessary to revise a letter without conferring with the dictator, they gave him a carbon copy so that he might see and profit by the changes which were made.

Use a Positive Approach

The supervisors who have been most successful in developing letter writers and, incidentally, in saving themselves time to devote to other phases of their jobs, have been careful to adopt a positive, rather than a negative, approach when asking men to revise letters. In the first place, they do not ordinarily disapprove letters containing minor weaknesses, and they thereby avoid earning the reputation of being overly concerned with inconsequential details. Their suggested changes are based on real need for improvement and not on mere personal preference. When a letter is disapproved, therefore, their men know that it is done for good reason, and the men know also that the letter is returned in an attitude of helpfulness and not one of negative criticism.

These successful supervisors make it a point to call attention to the good parts of a letter as well as to the weaknesses. Whether their suggestions and instructions are made orally, or in the form of notes on the original letter, or in memorandum form, they are made so clearly that there is no room for misunderstanding. The supervisors take care to place emphasis on major weaknesses, rather than on minor points of style. They either make specific suggestions for improvement, avoiding blanket negative criticisms ("this letter won't do," "it's unsatisfactory," "please rewrite it,") or lead the dictator to an understanding and an expression of the weaknesses and needed improvements. They teach their men, and at the same time avoid being thought arbitrary, by making every effort to demonstrate the soundness of their suggestions and instructions. Successful supervisors suggest changes in such a manner that their men feel, "Of course that's the way it should be--why didn't I think of it myself?"

Although all of this may take more time at first, the men learn to dictate letters which do not need revision. The chief uses only a few hours a week approving letters, instead of consuming from fifteen to twenty hours rewriting them.

Giving Credit

The case of one conscienticus and able supervisor will serve to illustrate how easily a supervisor can appear to be "stealing credit" from his men. This section chief was greatly disturbed and mystified by the attitude of his men. They seemed to become less and less interested and to lose enthusiasm and initiative. The chief sensed, moreover, a definite attitude of antagonism toward himself. The explanation, when it was finally found, was simple. This supervisor was zealous, perhaps too zealous, in his review of letters prepared in his section. He scrutinized every letter to be sure that no error, no matter how small, slipped through; frequently he regarded as errors ways of expression which merely ran counter to his personal preference. When his stenographer retyped letters on which he had made very minor changes, she typed on the carbon copies the name of her chief in place of the name of the original dictator. A letter writer may have spent several hours and have put forth his best effort in preparing a letter for the signature of a high official. Imagine his feeling when he later discovers that, after minor changes in punctuation, the letter has been credited to his chief.

The men in his section assumed that their chief was consciously taking credit due them for their good work, although in fact he had no intention of doing so. Believing what they did, they lost respect for him and disliked him. After all, his name was in the

record as having done the work which they had done. Frustration, helplessness, and disinterest resulted from the thwarting of the natural desire to be recognized and to become favorably known in the organization.

Remember to Give Encouragement

Successful supervisors make practical use of the fact that people crave and thrive on some occasional mention by their chief of the good work that they are doing.

If a man, who has been striving for months to improve his letter writing skill, is commended when he writes a good letter, he will double his efforts. There is probably no greater incentive than earned praise. Although there are times when it is both necessary and wise to "crack down," it is a proven fact that men learn their jobs many times more rapidly when encouraged than when criticised or ignored.

It is easy to forget to give adequate encouragement. Many of us come to take good work for granted. Because something must be done about mistakes while good work can be approved without comment, the natural tendency is to make no comment about a man's work until something goes wrong. It is necessary, therefore, to make a special effort to tell a man that he has done a good job. Do not wait until you have to ask him to rewrite a letter. Remember to give praise when praise is due.

Size up Men through Letter Review

Many chiefs find that their review of letters provides them with a practical means for learning how well their subordinates know their jobs and how thoroughly they are acquainted with the policies and procedures of the organization. A man's letters provide concrete evidence of how much he knows about his job; if he does not know procedures, he cannot express and interpret them in his letters. In many cases the letters a man dictates are the only concrete evidence of his worth to the organization.

Knowledge of the abilities, strong points, and weaknesses of subordinates is for many reasons essential to effective supervision. This knowledge is particularly important, from the point of view of developing letter writers, because it indicates to supervisors the ways in which they may help their subordinates.

Make Sure New Policies and Procedures Are Understood

Too much care cannot be taken to make sure that letter writers fully understand new policies, procedures, and regulations which will

affect the content of their letters. Frequently the procedure, which may have taken hours or even weeks to formulate, cannot be explained adequately in a memorandum or circular letter. In order to be sure that everyone understands a new policy or procedure, some chiefs make a practice of calling their men together to discuss its implications. Whatever methods are used, fewer incorrect letters are written when care is taken in transmitting new procedures.

Occasionally Discuss Progress

Many successful supervisors find it useful to sit down occasionally with each of their subordinates for no purpose other than to take stock and to discuss progress. They find in this an opportunity to review the man's strong points and his weaknesses, and to consider ways in which the weaknesses may be corrected. The chief may agree, for example, to give special attention to instructing the man on a certain procedure, or the man may decide to study English usage at home or to take a course in accounting. Such discussions, while an outgrowth of the chief's review of letters, usually cover questions of procedure, regulations, policies, and other topics affecting an employee's performance on his job.

Clearance of Outgoing Mail

Proper clearance of outgoing mail is a safeguard by means of which the accuracy of all statements and their conformity with the policies of an agency may be assured. The accuracy of all statements, from the standpoint of technical information and of general policy, should be our first consideration. Each person responsible for the technical information or policy statements in a letter should initial the file copy, remembering that the presence of his initials means that he will be held accountable for the accuracy of the statements pertaining to his division or section. The person who signs the letter must be able to regard these initials as indorsements upon which he can depend without further investigation.

While all questions of policy or doubtful points should be cleared through the proper persons, our objective should be minimum clearance with safety. A letter should not be referred to a person for clearance unless the subject matter deserves his review before the letter is mailed.

One way of reducing unnecessary clearance is to use circulating or carbon copies to inform others of the action taken; for this purpose initialing of the file copy is unnecessary and will delay mailing of the letter.

Failure to delegate responsibility is a common cause of too much clearance within a division. In such a case each successive layer of supervision reviews and initials each letter until it finally works its way up through the bottleneck to the top and is mailed. A great deal of unnecessary work and delay probably could be saved if executives and supervisors would instruct their subordinates to submit for review only those letters which really need their review. If a man has been properly trained, he will know which letters should be reviewed by his chief and which letters can be safely mailed without his chief's individual approval. In addition to saving lost motion, wise delegation of work and responsibility also stimulates the growth of employees, for men develop only by successfully assuming responsibility.

CHECK-LIST FOR SUPERVISORS OF LETTER WRITERS

The following list of questions provides an aid to reviewing your present methods of supervising letter writers.

1. Do I always remember that I am responsible for the growth and training of letter writers under my supervision and for enlisting their cooperation in preparing creditable letters?

2. Have I come to a satisfactory understanding with my subordinates regarding the standards by which a letter is judged acceptable?*

3. Do I ordinarily ask the original dictator to rewrite unsatisfactory letters--thus giving him an opportunity to learn--rather than revise them myself?

4. When it is necessary for me to rewrite a letter prepared by a subordinate, do I give him a copy of the revision so that he may not make the same type of mistake in future letters?

5. When my superior revises a letter approved by me, do I discuss the changes with the subordinate who submitted the letter for my approval?

6. When I refer an unsatisfactory letter to the dictator:

    a. Do I make a practice of calling attention to the good parts of the letter as well as to the weaknesses?

    b. Do I place emphasis on major weaknesses rather than on minor points of style?

c. Do I generally make specific constructive suggestions for improvement?

d. Do I give instructions and suggestions so clearly that there can be no misunderstanding?

7. Have I avoided the reputation of being overly concerned with inconsequential details?

8. When I make minor changes in letters prepared by others, do I take care not to accept credit for the work done by the original dictator?

9. Do I remember to give encouragement and to commend my subordinates for good work and progress?

10. Do I delegate responsibility and not try to do everything myself; for example, do I avoid personally reviewing every letter when I should be able to depend on the judgment of my subordinates to refer to me only those letters which really require my attention?

11. Do I make full use of my letter-reviewing as a means of appraising my subordinates' knowledge of their field of work and of their ability to use this knowledge?

12. Do I take time to thoroughly acquaint my men with new procedures and policies which will affect the content of their letters?

13. Do I take time periodically to discuss with my subordinates their progress and work, and to suggest ways by which they can become increasingly better qualified?

*The Letter Appraisal chart provides a means by which each chief may come to an understanding with his subordinates regarding the standards by which a letter is judged acceptable.

NOTES

SECTION 10

USEFUL BOOKS FOR LETTER AND REPORT WRITERS

The books in this list, reprinted from pp. 101-109 of "Writing Effective Government Letters," should provide helpful reference material for adults interested in (1) planning and preparation of business letters and reports; (2) correct usage as it affects grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, and related problems; (3) secretaries' handbooks; (4) style manuals; and (5) word study and vocabulary building. These books are intended to be merely an indication of the literature published in this field.

1. Planning and Preparation of Business Letters and Reports

ADVANCED BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE. By G. B. Hotchkiss and E. J. Kilduff. Harper and Brothers, New York. Although written primarily for students of university grade, this book should prove helpful to men and women in business. It explains and illustrates the fundamental principles that govern all kinds of business letters, and also gives practical methods of handling the more typical situations.

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE HANDBOOK. By James H. Picken. A. W. Shaw Company, New York. For the person interested in the psychology which underlies sales, collection, and other business letter writing situations, this 800 page book should be extremely valuable. It is an attempt, as the author says, "to give a true picture of the various ways in which business letters are used by modern business organizations, and also to set up rules or standards of practice by which those who do business by mail should proceed in order to realize the best results."

BUSINESS LETTER PRACTICE. By John B. Opdycke. Isaac Pitman and Sons, New York. The author, a pioneer in the movement to promote better business letters, is also a recognized leader in the fields of advertising and salesmanship. The function of letters in selling commodities, services, and ideas is emphasized and illustrated with numerous exhibits. A symposium on business letter writing by Roger W. Babson, Louis K. Liggett, Joseph H. Appel, and Charles H. Sabin gives added practical value to this book. TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE, a more recent book by the same author is also highly recommended; published by Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York.

THE BUSINESS LETTER-WRITER'S MANUAL. By Charles Edgar Buck. Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York. The major purpose of the author is to give to business men and women helpful hints on the writing of business letters—hints that can be adopted at once into everyday use. Besides the chapters devoted to inquiry, collection, complaint, adjustment, and other types of letters, the book includes such sections as "How to Begin a Letter," "How to Close a Letter," and "Hints of Special Value to the Secretary and Stenographer."

EFFECTIVE ENGLISH IN BUSINESS. By R. R. Aurner. South-Western Publishing Company, Cincinnati. A practical and comprehensive reference book for letter writers and correspondence counselors, this volume shows the results of the author's experience in counseling with business men in their efforts to improve their correspondence. In his own writing, Aurner exemplifies to a superlative degree the principles of clear, forceful expression which he advocates.

NEW BUSINESS ENGLISH. By G. B. Hotchkiss and C. A. Drew. American Book Company, New York. Beginning with the first chapter, which describes the results of a review of his firm's correspondence by the president, this book is directed to the problems of business men and women. It contains samples of poor letters and their revisions; also sections on official and social forms, claims and adjustments, collection letters, and many others.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE LETTER WRITING. By L. C. Lockley. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. This book bears out the author's theory that, in the development of the knack of writing effective business letters, two things are of fundamental importance: analysis of letters and practice in writing them. The illustrative material and letter problems should prove particularly helpful.

SMOOTH SAILING LETTERS. By L. E. Frailey. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York. A practical treatment of letter writing methods in a light, easy-to-follow style; this book contains also an appendix with 50 letters selected by the author as "outstanding because they are natural, human, and friendly."

SUCCESSFUL LETTER WRITING. (Business and Personal.) By Nels and Aline Hower. Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York. This book is an outgrowth of the authors' experience in conducting a consulting service in letter writing. It deals with problems of business and personal correspondence and contains numerous examples of actual business letters, many of which have been analyzed and revised by the authors. The last five chapters should be of special interest to secretaries and stenographers.

2. Correct Usage--Grammar, Sentence Structure, Punctuation, and Related Problems

HANDBOOK OF BUSINESS ENGLISH. By G. B. Hotchkiss and E. J. Kilduff. New York University Book Store, New York. A brief presentation of the principal rules of good English--grammar, sentence structure, paragraphing, punctuation, capitalization, letter writing, and report making--adapted to the needs of business.

MODERN ENGLISH USAGE. By H. W. Fowler. Oxford University Press. This 742-page volume contains a remarkable amount of solid and useful information on English usage. The materials in this book are arranged in alphabetical dictionary order. Readers will be particularly interested in the common-sense explanation in the section entitled "Split Infinitive" (p. 558).

NEW HANDBOOK OF COMPOSITION. By Edwin C. Woolley and Franklin W. Scott. D. C. Heath and Company, New York. This is essentially a reference book which presents, in concise form, rules regarding good English, grammar, sentence structure, paragraphing, manuscript arrangement, punctuation, spelling, and the making of bibliographies.

PRACTICAL ENGLISH AND EFFECTIVE SPEECH. By Estelle B. Hunter. The Better-Speech Institute of America, Chicago. A self-teaching course prepared especially for adults, this series of 15 booklets covers vocabulary development, grammar, pronunciation, enunciation, and the fundamental principles of effective oral expression.

SELF-AIDS IN THE ESSENTIALS OF GRAMMATICAL USAGE. By L. J. O'Rourke. Educational and Personnel Publishing Company, Washington, D. C. This book presents an effective method by means of which anyone may master the essentials of English usage. Its chief recommendation is that, as a self-testing and self-teaching manual, it enables a person to concentrate on the constructions which trouble him and, by proper use of the compact reference section and numerous drills, to develop a sure knowledge of the principles of correct expression.

THE CENTURY HANDBOOK OF WRITING. By Garland Greever and Easley S. Jones. The Century Company, New York. A feature of this book is a 100-article chart, which provides a convenient reference to the material dealing with grammar, diction, spelling, sentence structure, and related topics.

THE TYRANNY OF WORDS. By Stuart Chase. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York. Here is a searching analysis of the real meanings of words--an attempt to dissect the words we commonly use; or, as the author says, "an attempt to squeeze out the verbiage and find what, if anything, these terms mean." The book presents some astonishing results of this squeezing process.

WORDS AS THEY LOOK. By Prof. Geo. W. Conklin. The Saalfield Publishing Company. A quick-reference spelling manual, containing over 60,000 words which are most often misused or misspelled, those which sound alike but are of different spelling and different meaning, and others with questionable spelling. Emphasis is placed on the troublesome parts of words by use of bold type. In the foreword entitled "Psychology of Spelling," Dr. M. V. O'Shea, of the University of Wisconsin, presents a non-technical and authoritative statement of the problems encountered in spelling English words, together with a number of practical suggestions for increasing one's proficiency in correct spelling.

3. Secretaries' Handbooks

TRAINING FOR SECRETARIAL PRACTICE. By Sarah A. Taintor. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York. An authoritative manual for secretaries and stenographers, this book aims to cover the entire work of a secretary. It consists of three parts: (1) the secretary herself, her training, qualifications, duties, responsibilities, and opportunities; (2) letter writing, with special reference to the best usage of disputed points of form and content; (3) miscellaneous business writing and secretarial information, including minutes, resolutions, reports, and filing. A feature of the third edition, published in 1932, is the section on the work of a social secretary in official circles.

STANDARD HANDBOOK FOR SECRETARIES. By Lois Irene Hutchinson. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York. An excellent reference book to answer questions about capitalization, spelling, pronunciation, punctuation, letters and letter writing, filing, legal and court papers, copyrights, and numerous other subjects with which a secretary should be familiar.

THE SECRETARY'S DESK BOOK. By Thomas Kite Brown, Jr. The John C. Winston Company, Philadelphia. A modern guide to correct English, this book contains approved forms for business, official, and social correspondence; includes also the Winston Simplified Dictionary.

4. Style Manuals

A MANUAL OF STYLE. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. This volume of typographical practice, now in its tenth edition, contains rules for composition, hints to authors and editors on manuscripts, hints to copyreaders and proofreaders, technical terms and symbols, specimens of type, as well as chapters on punctuation, spelling, tables, indexes, and formulas.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE STYLE MANUAL. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. This manual deals particularly with the preparation of Department of State correspondence and state papers, the rhetorical style used, forms of salutation, both American and foreign. The section entitled "Drafting of Correspondence" (p. 16), is a practical guide for letter writers.

U. S. GOVERNMENT STYLE MANUAL. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. As the name implies, the book is intended to facilitate government printing. Its contents include suggestions to authors and editors, as well as guides for capitalization, spelling, compound words, abbreviations, numerals, punctuation, and miscellaneous information of interest to those concerned with the preparation of government letters, reports, and publications.

5. Word Study and Vocabulary Building

CENTURY VOCABULARY BUILDER. By Garland Greever and Joseph M. Bachelor. The Century Company, New York. The authors, while recognizing that there are many ways of building a vocabulary, outline a systematic program including lists of words and exercises that will enable a person to "summon, not a word that will do, but a word that will express the idea with precision." The importance of appraising words on the basis of their usefulness is emphasized, as shown by the following statement in the preface: "It (this volume) helps you to bring more and more words into workaday harness--to gain such mastery over them that you can speak and write them with fluency, flexibility, precision, and power."

ENGLISH SYNONYMS, ANTONYMS, AND PREPOSITIONS. By James C. Fernald. Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York. An invaluable reference book for those desiring to acquire facility in the use of the right word--the word that expresses the thought with the exact shade of meaning intended by the speaker or writer.

EXPRESSIVE ENGLISH. By James C. Fernald. Grosset and Dunlap, New York. This book grew out of the author's experience in conducting English classes for government employees in Washington, D. C. It covers a wide range of topics, including such chapters as "The Simplicity of English," "Fitting Choice of Words," and "English Connectives." The keynote of the book is indicated by a question which Fernald, in the preface, suggests that the speaker or writer should ask: "What, for my purpose, can words now and here best express?"

MODERN ENGLISH. By G. P. Krapp. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. In popular form, this book presents the results of a thorough historical study of English sounds, words, and grammar. The sections on "Slang" and "Profit and Loss in Word Borrowing" indicate the practical point of view of the author.

THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE. By H. L. Mencken. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. In his characteristic forceful and lively style, Mencken has produced what should be a lasting contribution. Over 700 pages are devoted to a comparison of the English of England and the English of America, with special emphasis upon the differences in vocabulary, syntax, idiom, and grammar.

THESAURUS OF ENGLISH WORDS AND PHRASES. By Peter Mark Roget. Grosset and Dunlap, New York. This is a standard reference work containing several thousand words arranged, not in alphabetical order as they are in a dictionary, but according to the ideas which they express. It should be of particular value to the person whose memory does not produce the desired word promptly, and who will be benefited by having a group of words from which he may select the most appropriate to convey his thought.

VOCABULARY BUILDER NOTEBOOK. By E. J. Kilduff. Century Company, New York. This notebook, the size of a small check book, is a practical device for localizing and mastering words which a person desires to add to his vocabulary. The use of the notebook, based upon a plan of continuous and systematic effort, is explained in the introduction entitled "Increasing Your Vocabulary." Space is provided for the pronunciation, definition, example of use, and synonyms and antonyms of 500 words.

WEBSTER'S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY. G. and C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts. This dictionary is the accepted authority for the United States Government Printing Office and also for the majority of printing presses and proofreaders throughout the country. The unabridged edition includes definitions of over 550,000 words, in addition to a

brief history of the English language; sections on spelling and pronunciation; abbreviations; foreign words and phrases; a gazetteer on the principal geographical names of the world; and a dictionary of biography. In fact, it may properly be regarded as a condensed encyclopedia.

WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY. G. and C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts. This abridged edition, containing definitions of over 106,000 words, is convenient for desk reference.

WORDS AND THEIR WAYS IN ENGLISH SPEECH. By J. B. Greenough and G. L. Kittredge. The Macmillan Company, New York. A study of the processes of development of the English language; includes such chapters as "Slang and Legitimate Speech," "Complexity of the English Vocabulary," and "The Development of Words." The origins and history of such commonly used words as "reputation," "character," "candid," and "mortgage," to mention only a few described in this book, should be of interest to all students of words.

NOTES

LETTER APPRAISAL CHART

This appraisal chart is intended to assist you in revising your own letters or in indicating to others the specific weaknesses of the letters that are submitted to you for review.

Before appraising a letter, be sure to determine its exact purpose. What response is desired from the addressee ?

CAN YOU ANSWER "YES" TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ?

IS THE LETTER:

1. COMPLETE
   - a. Does it give all information necessary to accomplish its purpose ?
   - b. Does it answer fully all the questions, asked or implied, in the incoming letter ?
2. CONCISE
   - a. Does the letter include *only* the essential facts ?
   - b. Are the ideas expressed in the fewest words consistent with clearness, completeness, and courtesy; have irrelevant details and unnecessary repetition been eliminated ?
3. CLEAR
   - a. Is the language adapted to the vocabulary of the addressee ?
   - b. Do the words exactly express the thought ?
   - c. Is the sentence structure clear ?
   - d. Is each paragraph one complete thought unit ?
   - e. Are the paragraphs arranged in proper sequence; are the ideas presented in the most effective order ?
4. CORRECT
   - a. Is the accuracy of all factual information beyond question ?
   - b. Are all statements in strict conformity with policies ?
   - c. Is the letter free from: (1) grammatical errors, (2) spelling errors, (3) misleading punctuation ?
5. APPROPRIATE IN TONE
   - a. Is the tone calculated to bring about the desired response ?
   - b. Is the letter free from antagonistic words or phrases ?
   - c. Is it free from hackneyed or stilted phrases which may amuse or irritate the addressee ?
   - d. Does the entire letter evidence a desire to cooperate fully ?
6. NEAT AND WELL SET UP

   Will a favorable first impression be created by: (1) freedom from strikeovers and obvious erasures; (2) even typing; (3) position of letter on the page ?

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE LETTER AS A WHOLE ?

To what extent is the letter likely to accomplish its purpose, obtain the desired response, and build good will ? In other words, how do you rate its *general effectiveness?* Underline the word which best expresses your rating:

OUTSTANDING · GOOD · PASSABLE · UNSATISFACTORY

IN RATING ANOTHER'S LETTER:

If the letter is "unsatisfactory," be sure to indicate the specific weaknesses which necessitate revision. Similarly, if the letter is only "passable," indicate clearly the weaknesses to which attention should be given in future letters.

LETTERS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION, NO. 6A

WEATHER BUREAU

FACTS IN THE CASE:

The following two letters are considered as a single case because both refer to similar inquiries about instruments. The letters are of interest not only for appraisal of their individual merits but for discussion of the need to shape the reply to suit the character and importance of the inquiry.

The first letter is in reply to an inquiry from The Mayor of Blank City who has inquired briefly as to the possibility of purchasing used Weather Bureau instruments for equipping a local educational institution. He concludes his letter with an expression of appreciation in cordial terms. The letter follows:

"In the interest of the Blank City College which is endeavoring to expand its science department, and particularly to offer a thorough course in meteorology because of its interest to the student body and to the local aviation industry, will you be so kind as to inform me whether it will be possible for the city to purchase a complete outfit of meteorological instruments suitable for instruction purposes. The city proposes to present this equipment to Blank City College. I make this request following a conversation with Mr. "X", manager of our airport, in which he said that he believed the Weather Bureau was replacing the equipment in many of its offices and that it might be possible to obtain some of the used equipment at a great reduction in price.

"I need hardly state that our plan is prompted by the desire to be of public service and to expand our educational work and not because of any self-interest. The President of Blank College, whom you may have met, is very enthusiastic about the proposed enlargement of the course in meteorology and has suggested that this request coming from the mayor of the city will serve to show the public interest in the proposal.

"I take this opportunity to express the appreciation of our citizens for the very valuable service which the Weather Bureau rendered during the past winter, particularly in its timely warnings of cold waves. Many of our influential shippers and farmers have expressed their high esteem for this valuable service. Very cordially yours,"

Proposed Reply to the Mayor* (Letter to be appraised)

"Your letter dated October 4, 1939, relative to the purchase of a barometer from the Weather Bureau is at hand.

"The Weather Bureau can not dispose of such instruments by sale whether they

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* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

are serviceable or obsolete. Barometers may be obtained either from the Taylor Instrument Companies, Rochester, New York, or from Henry J. Green, 1191 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

"The Weather Bureau can not undertake to give a complete register of the manufacturers of such equipment, and no discrimination is intended if the name of any firm has been omitted, nor is the inclusion therein of any name to be construed as an indorsement as to quality and prices. *** Very truly yours,"

The second inquiry is a brief request from a boy, aged ten, written on a postal. The boy has become interested in building a weather observatory so that he can forecast weather during his summer vacation. His letter follows:

"Will you tell me how I can forecast the weather and what instruments I will need and where I can get them. I am ten years old and I want to build a weather station so that I can forecast for my scout trips this summer. I hope you can help me out. Signed _____"

Proposed Reply to Boy* (Letter to be appraised)

"Your letter dated October 4, 1939, is at hand, requesting information regarding weather observations, instruments, etc.

"To accurately forecast the weather requires access to the numerous and widespread observations such as the Weather Bureau employs, and a scientific knowlege of such matters. It is sometimes interesting to the amateur, however, to follow the changes of atmospheric pressure with a barometer, usually an aneroid, such as is described in the inclosed leaflet. Such readings of the barometer are associated with weather changes as covered in the Wind barometer Table, also inclosed.

"As regards the making of instruments, the Weather Bureau is not in position to furnish directions for such work, but a series of articles will be found in Popular Science for the year 1935, which should be obtainable in your library, and which tells how the simpler forms of meteorological instruments may be made in the home work shop. Very truly yours,"

* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

Assignment

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of this letter, using the standards listed in the Letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a nonessential statement has been included, mark it "2a."

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general effectiveness of this letter:

OUTSTANDING GOOD PASSABLE UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent.

LETTER FOR GROUP DISCUSSION - NO. 7A

WEATHER BUREAU

FACTS IN THE CASE

Mr. X, operator of a small fleet of fishing vessels along the Blank coast, wrote the Chief of the Weather Bureau requesting explanation of a sudden gale which damaged some of his vessels. His letter follows:

Mr. X's letter, dated March 25:

Chief, Weather Bureau. Sir: On March 17th your Seaboard office told my headquarters that the wind that night and during the 18th would be moderate to fresh westerly with fair weather and on the strength of that six of our boats left port. They ran into a fresh northeast gale on the 18th and received severe damage from the heavy seas. Some of the crew were injured. I should like to hear how you explain what happened to your prediction.

Proposed Reply to Mr. X* (Letter to be appraised)

Sir: Replying to your letter of March 25, please be advised that the minor disturbance which appeared on the weather map of March 16 along the East coast of Florida moved rapidly northeastward with deepening barometer and by the evening of March 17 was central about 100 miles east of the North Carolina Coast where it was shown on the map as a storm of marked intensity. It was attended by strong Northeast winds off shore north of latitude thirty degrees, shifting to fresh to strong west and southwest winds over the southern portion of the North Carolina coast and strong west and northwest over the north portion east of 75° W and west of 65° W, while to the eastward southeast shifting to south gales prevailed. Generally fair weather with cloudy to partly cloudy skies occurred in the south portion of the storm south of thirty five degrees north latitude and west of 70° West longitude, but north of forty degrees heavy rain fell over a wide area as the disturbance moved eastward with increasing northeast gales on the 18th. Enclosed are weather maps for March 17, 18 and 19th which show the track followed by the low pressure area. The anticyclone to the North caused the path of the storm to recurve eastward on the 19th.

*It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

Assignment

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of this letter, using the standards listed in the Letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a nonessential statement has been included, mark it "2a."

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general effectiveness of this letter:

OUTSTANDING GOOD PASSABLE UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent.

Office of the Chief

May 27, 1940

MEMORANDUM
FOR
THOSE ATTENDING LETTER WRITING DISCUSSIONS

Subject: Assignments for Tuesday, June 4, and Thursday, June 6.

Attached are letters for group discussion Nos. 4A and 5A. It has been decided to have both of these at the next assignment on Tuesday, June 4. Your appraisals and revisions are therefore due not later than Monday noon, June 3. This will permit the division heads who lead the discussions to go over the appraisals and revisions prior to the meeting on Tuesday morning.

Appraisals and revisions to problem 4A should be sent to Mr. Bernard who will lead the discussion for that problem; those for 5A should be sent to Mr. Weber who is the discussion leader for that problem.

Two more problems, Nos. 6A and 7A, will be distributed in the next day or two for appraisal and discussion at the final conference on Thursday, June 6. The revisions of these letters will be due Wednesday, June 5. They should be sent to the discussion leaders -- Mr. Swain for 6A and Mr. Kincer for 7A.

F. W. Reichelderfer

Chief of Bureau.

LETTER FOR GROUP DISCUSSION - NO. 4A

WEATHER BUREAU

FACTS IN THIS CASE:

The Weather Bureau issues daily 36-hour weather forecasts and a weekly outlook every Saturday, but it does not attempt to forecast for longer periods. The Bureau is attempting to develop methods of long-range weather forecasts, but progress has been slow. The Bureau annually receives numerous letters like the one reprinted below, some of them presumably from cranks who claim to have developed their own methods of long-range weather forecasting, others from business men who believe almanac weather forecasts are reasonably accurate and who wonder why the Bureau does not use almanac methods. The Hydro-Electric Power Company, from which the incoming letter in this case was received, is one of the largest power companies in the country.

Letter of July 1 from John A. Doe, manager of the Hydro-Electric Power Company:

> "I should appreciate very much receiving your best estimate of what the weather will be during the remainder of the summer. I am particularly interested in whether the rainfall will be above or below normal. Such information is of very great importance to an electric company such as ours because it determines how we shall control our operations. Even if you cannot give a forecast which is 100 per cent accurate, it will help us to have some idea as to the character of the weather for the next two or three months.
>
> "I believe I am justified in insisting on a definite reply to my inquiry. I have in the past addressed similar letters to local Weather Bureau offices and have received evasive answers. Recently I read in newspaper and magazine articles that Professor Z of Y University is making forecasts of weather a month ahead and is selling his service for $200 a year. If this professor can make long-range forecasts, I think it is time that your forecasters got busy and did the same thing free of charge for the taxpayers who support your 5-million dollar bureau."

Proposed reply to Mr. Doe, prepared for the signature of the Chief of the Bureau* (to be appraised)

"In reply to your letter of July 1 requesting a weather forecast for the remainder of the summer, I am pleased to advise you that the Weather Bureau does not issue forecasts for periods longer than a few days at most. The Bureau receives a large number of requests such as yours and invariably explains that there is no known way of forecasting weather for the United States for a period longer than a few days. I trust that this answers your inquiry. If we can be of any further service we hope that you will write us. Thanking you for your interest,"

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* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

Assignment

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of this letter, using the standards listed in the Letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a nonessential statement has been included, mark it "2a."

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general effectiveness of this letter:

OUTSTANDING GOOD PASSABLE UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent.

LETTERS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION - NO. 5A

WEATHER BUREAU

FACTS IN THIS CASE:

The Chief of Weather Bureau received the following letter dated January 5, 1938, from the Official in Charge of a Weather Bureau City Office:

In re: request from a model airplane group to use available space in the Weather Bureau Office at (blank) for a school room.

We have consulted with the County Commissioners and while one, the minority commissioner is in favor of this arrangement and the other two would or would not give whole hearty consent or disapproval just saying that if Washington wanted to do it that it was OK by them.

I find a Mr. "A", the local State Police communication officer to be one of the group and he states this is mainly for experimental purposes and that they have been unable to secure a good location.

They would build and make available for Weather Bureau use a work shop with small machine tools. This is in return for the above privilege and they would pay for their own current consumed.

There will be room for them in the storage section where they will build their own room to protect their equipment. The local official feels that he would not comment one way or the other but if Washington could see advantage in this your official would gladly go along.

Proposed Letter to Official in Charge* (to be appraised)

Referring to your letter of January 5, 1938, relative to request received for use of part of the space in the Weather Bureau Office for the maintenance and operation of a model airplane class room:

The Weather Bureau endeavors, whenever conditions permit, to cooperate with outside interests and extend to them such assistance as may be practicable. In the present instance, however, the Chief of Bureau considers it inadvisable to approve the use of our space. You can readily understand that this would establish a precedent which, however advantageous to the Bureau in this particular instance, might create embarrassment should similar requests be made from other and perhaps undesirable parties.

Altogether, it is believed necessary to instruct you to refuse the request, which should, of course, be done with as much diplomacy as practicable.

(Signed by Chief of Bureau)

* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

Assignment

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of this letter, using the standards listed in the Letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a nonessential statement has been included, mark it "2a."

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general effectiveness of this letter:

OUTSTANDING GOOD PASSABLE UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent.

May 24, 1940

MEMORANDUM

In order to provide a more appropriate set of facts for use in problem 3A to be discussed on Monday, May 27, a substitute case project has been adopted and the problem accordingly revised. Members of the class are requested to destroy the problem (3A) distributed at the Thursday meeting and to complete the assignment in accordance with the letter 3A (Revised), attached hereto.

Proposed replies, without signature or initials, should be in Mr. Tannehill's hands by 10 a.m. Saturday, May 25.

Respectfully,

F. W. Richardson Jr.

Chief of Bureau.

LETTERS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION - NO. 3A (Revised)

WEATHER BUREAU

FACTS IN THIS CASE:

The Weather Bureau has five million upper air punch cards but no tabulator and only one sorting machine. Theoretical studies indicate a relation between the behavior of upper air winds and the development of drought conditions in the Middle West. The Secretary of Agriculture has asked for detailed information on this correlation in order to determine its value as an index in drought planning.

The "X" Department of the Government has a large staff available for sorting and tabulating and many of these employees are at present very lightly occupied because of a seasonal lull in their work. "X" Department also has all necessary equipment for rapid compilation of data from upper air punch cards. The use of these people and machines provides an excellent means for testing the correlation as requested by the Secretary of Agriculture. It is important that the work be done immediately since the results may greatly influence the planning of several bureaus in the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. "A" in the Blank Division of the Weather Bureau has discussed the matter informally with some of the junior officials in "X" Department and has learned that they are willing to assist if so authorized by the chief of their department. The chief of "X" Department has not been approached with reference to this work and no one in his immediate office is informed of the circumstances. The punch card employees are not familiar with the project nor with the circumstances, which require that the work be completed promptly. The proposed letter to the chief of "X" Department follows:

Proposed Letter to Chief of "X" Department* (to be appraised)

"Sir: Your cooperation is desired by this Bureau for the purpose of compiling upper air observational data in order to verify certain conclusions which we have reached after a detailed study of the relation of winds aloft to Middle West drought conditions. Your part of the work is desired within ten days. I am pleased to enclose herewith a full statement of the problem and detailed instructions telling the employees in your department how we want the observations summarized.

"Because of the pressing need for the completion of this work for the Weather Bureau's activities and for other agencies we trust that you will find it possible for your department to give us this cooperation. Further details will be arranged between Mr. "A" of this Bureau and any representative whom you may care to designate of your department.

"Thanking you in advance for cooperation and awaiting your advice, remain"

* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

Assignment

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of this letter, using the standards listed in the Letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a nonessential statement has been included, mark it "2a."

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general effectiveness of this letter:

OUTSTANDING GOOD PASSABLE UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent.

LETTERS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION - NO. 2A

WEATHER BUREAU

FACTS IN THIS CASE:

The Commissioner of Blank City, in the attempt to place the new airport administration building on a sound amortization basis, has established certain rental rates for space in the building. He considers the rates fair and representative of prevailing rates. He insists that all occupants of the building, including the Weather Bureau, pay rental at these rates and has refused to give the space needed for the Bureau's airport office unless the regular rental is paid. The Civil Aeronautics Authority has recommended that the Weather Bureau establish this office. The public interest would be served by such an office. In addition, circumstances make it practically imperative that the office be established. The Bureau desires to establish the office but has no funds for rentals at regular rates. Moreover, payment of rental would set a precedent which would mean demands throughout the country for such payments totaling more than $100,000 annually. The Commissioner's letter to the Weather Bureau and a proposed reply are reprinted below.

Commissioner's letter, dated February 19, 1940:

Your letter of February 17th regarding space at the Municipal Airport for the United States Weather Bureau. It seems that this matter has created considerable controversy regarding the rental that we have proposed to the Weather Bureau office. We regard this rental as an exceedingly nominal amount. Of course, it will be an expenditure of approximately $600.00 in order to prepare this space for the Weather Bureau office that being the cost of what might appear as a high rent for the first eighteen months.

We are more than glad to cooperate with the Bureau as shown in our offer for this nominal rent that we have agreed to let this space and I am sure that this is the least amount that we can consider as rental. My suggestion would be that the Weather Bureau office should construct their own building at the airport, the City furnishing the necessary grounds free of charge.

As stated above we consider our offer exceedingly nominal and very reasonable and it would be impossible for us to cut this any lower. Hoping that you can find some suitable location that can meet your requirements, I am,

PROPOSED REPLY TO THE COMMISSIONER * (to be appraised).

Reference is made to your letter of February 19, 1940, in which you advised that it would not be possible for the City to provide 600 square feet of office space for the Weather Bureau at the Municipal Airport for less than $95 a month. Since that time a representative

of this office, Mr. X X X, has visited your city and discussed the matter with you in detail.

No progress has been possible in this matter at this office for reason that the Weather Bureau cannot pay these rentals. It is true that some Federal bureaus can pay rentals through special appropriations but you must not lose sight of the fact that the Weather Bureau gives a valuable service to the local public which the Government maintans far exceeds in value to given local interests any cost which may accrue to the community for providing rent-free quarters for the Bureau in which to conduct its activities. Therefore, we simply do not have funds to pay the rentals you request and cannot get them.

It is the desire of the Bureau to locate its consolidated weather service at your municipal airport so that this may then be given not only for aviation but also that the present weather service to the general public may be placed on a continuous basis, day and night, throughout the year. This will permit the giving of weather advices to the public by our personnel concerning weather conditions affecting the locality to affected interests in your city at any hour, and may upon occasions of freezes, frosts, hurricanes or other violent storms and floods, mean the saving of property damage and even their lives to your citizens and the surrounding communities. In any event this Bureau feels that the improved service possible under these arrangements would justify the City in furnishing adequate quarters as we have specified for a nominal servicing cost of about $35 a month, and it is hoped that you will see your way clear to present the matter to the Commissioners on this basis.

Due to the unsatisfactory and unsafe weather reporting situation now obtaining at the aiport which results from the inability of the Weather Bureau to place personnel there because of lack of quarters, it is necessary that a decision be made as soon as possible. It will therefore be appreciated if you will give this matter early consideration and let us have your final decision in the matter as soon as possible. It is hoped that this will be favorable since it will for reasons outlined above not be possible for the Bureau to proceed towards the assignment of personnel and the establishment of a station at your airport for improved service to the city and public at large if the rental heretofore proposed is still insisted upon.

If you think it advisable we will authorize a representative to call and confer further with you and other members of the city administration who may be concerned.

Assignment

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of this letter, using the standards listed in the Letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a non-essential statement has been included, mark it "2a."

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general effectiveness of the letter.

OUTSTANDING
GOOD
PASSABLE
UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write to the Commissioner. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent.

* * * * * * * * * * *

* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

The following revisions of Correspondence Problem No. 1 A are reprinted exactly as they were submitted by members of the Weather Bureau Officials' Letter Writing Conference.

Some of these revisions are good; others obviously fall short of the standards to which a Weather Bureau letter should conform. Compare these letters with your own revision. In the light of the discussion at the Monday, May 20, meeting what changes would you make in your revision?

- 1 -

Thank you for your letter of May 12 announcing the Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World and inviting the Blank Agency to cooperate in the activities. We shall be glad indeed to prepare the exhibit and to be at home to the members of the conference on June 2 and 11 as you suggest.

I have asked Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Department to consult with you regarding space for the exhibit and to ask for any suggestions you may have that would be helpful to us in making a success of the "at homes".

I assure you it is a pleasure to us to participate in this way.

- 2 -

I take pleasure in acknowledging receipt of your letter of May 12, 1940, in which you so kindly invite the Blank Agency to prepare an exhibit for the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World and also to be "at home" to delegates on June 2 and June 11. We shall be very glad to cooperate as requested.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relation Division has already called your office to determine the space available for an exhibit and as soon as this information is obtained, we will begin at once to select material for a display that we trust will be both interesting and instructive.

The opportunity to meet the delegates and personally explain the work of our agency to them is much appreciated. We will be most happy to be "at home" to members of the convention on June 2 and June 11, as indicated in the tentative program included in your letter.

It is noted that according to the tentative program June 4 will be devoted to visits to Government agencies and public buildings. We will appreciate being advised as to whether the Blank Agency will be included in your itinerary and, if so, at what hour we may expect the delegates to arrive.

We are anxious to contribute as much as possible to the success of the conference and will welcome any suggestions which you may wish to offer regarding the features of our work in which the delegates are most likely to be interested.

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

- 3 -

We will be glad to cooperate with you in preparing an exhibit and holding "at homes" on June 2 and 11, as requested in your letter of May 12.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division will call you to make arrangements for an exhibit and will handle the details of the visits to our agency.

If we can be of any further service to you, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

- 4 -

Your letter of May 12th announcing the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World is at hand and the contents are noted with much interest.

This agency appreciates the opportunity to present an exhibit on the convention floor to the 1,500 rural women of the Conference. It will be our effort to place in this exhibit examples of all of our activities which will be of especial interest to your group. The Chief of our Agency has designated Mr. Smith, Public Relations Division, to confer with your office as to exhibit space.

We are always happy to have visitors but are especially pleased when we know in advance the days on which we are to have such distinguished guests. We will make very special preparations that the visits of your delegates may be both pleasant and profitable. The proposed dates are acceptable with us. June 2nd will be reserved as "At Home" for the delegates from foreign countries and June 11th for the delegates from our own country.

We expect to put much effort into the making of plans for the exhibit and for the two special visitors days and would like very much to have the advice of yourself or of someone from your office. There are many details to be worked out and your assistance will be very valuable. We will send a representative to your office for conference as soon as this may be convenient to you.

- 5 -

The Blank Agency will be very pleased to prepare an exhibit and to be "at home" to delegates of the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

Mr. Smith of our Agency has called your office in regard to space available for our exhibit. We will be glad to confer with you or your representative on plans for making the "at home" days of June 2 and 11 a success.

- 6 -

The invitation contained in your letter of May 12, 1940, to prepare an exhibit for and to be "at home" to delegates of the Associated Country Women of the World, is accepted with pleasure.

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

Mr. John Smith has been designated to be in charge of the exhibit, and Miss Jane Brown to arrange for the "at home" on June 2 and June 11, 1940.

Please advise when it will be convenient for these two persons to confer with you about their plans.

The opportunity, to cooperate in this undertaking, is appreciated.

- 7 -

At hand is your letter announcing the triennial conference to the Associated Country Women of the World, in session from June first through June fifth in Washington, D. C., and your tentative program of events scheduled June second, fourth and eleventh.

Mr. Brown of our Personnel Division and Mr. Smith from the Public Relations Division, have been designated to work with your office toward making arrangements for entertaining conference members, as far as this Agency is concerned, and will call at your office in regard to the number of persons to be expected for the 'at home' of June eleventh, and the space available for the exhibit of this Agency.

It is suggested that the 'at home' held by this Agency on June second be international in scope, while that of the eleventh deal with the actual accomplishments of the Agency among our own citizens.

In appreciation of this opportunity to cooperate with your Association, and expressing the desire that your suggestions for betterment of our exhibit be made without hesitation, I beg to remain,

- 8 -

We are very glad to accept your invitation of May 12 to take part in the conference of Associated Country Women of the World.

The dates you mention on which the Blank Agency may be "at home" to delegates are agreeable to us.

I have asked Mr. O. O. Smith of our Information Division to work with you and your staff in arranging the details of our participation. He informs me that he has already discussed with you the space allotted our exhibit. He will, I am sure, be most grateful for your suggestions regarding both the exhibit and the reception of the delegates by our staff.

- 9 -

In reply to your letter of May 12, I assure you that the Blank Agency will prepare an exhibit for the conference, and will be glad to be "at home" on June 2 and June 11 to the 1,500 delegates of the Associated Country Women of the World.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has conferred with your office regarding space available for the exhibit.

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

We will appreciate your advice as to what we should do to make the "at homes" pleasant and interesting for the delegates.

- 10 -

Referring to your letter of May 12, announcing a conference of the Associated Country Women of the World, beginning June 2:

We will be glad to prepare an exhibit and to be "at home" to the delegates on Tuesday, June 2, and Thursday, June 11.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already called your office in regard to the space available for an exhibit, but we will be glad to accept your offer to confer further regarding the plans for the "at homes" and the exhibit.

- 11 -

The Blank Agency is most pleased to accept your invitation to prepare an exhibit for the Conference mentioned in your letter of May 12, 1940. It is understood that Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already contacted your office in regard to the space available for the exhibit.

We will also be glad to be "at home" to delegates of the Conference on June 2 and June 11, 1940, and any suggestions that you have to offer in regard to the manner in which the "at homes" should be handled will be appreciated.

- 12 -

The invitation in your letter of May 12 to prepare an exhibit for the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World is accepted, with thanks. We will also be pleased to be "at home" to the delegates from foreign countries on Tuesday, June 2, and to delegates from the United States on Thursday, June 11.

Mr. Smith, of our Public Relations division, has been designated to visit your office to arrange for space for our exhibit, and to confer further with you regarding plans for the "at homes" and the exhibit.

We appreciate the opportunity extended to us to contribute to the success of the Conference.

- 13 -

We have received your letter of May 12, regarding the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

Your invitation to us to prepare an exhibit for the convention has been accepted with appreciation, as has also the invitation to officials of the agency to be "at home" on June 2 and 11th.

With regard to the exhibit, it will aid us in its preparation if you will furnish to Mr. X of this agency data on the space available for it.

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

The Chief will be pleased to confer with you personally on the general plans for the exhibit and for the "at homes."

You may count upon our fullest cooperation in your undertaking.

- 14 -

As requested in your letter of May 12th, arrangements are being made for an exhibit showing the work of this agency and for "at home" dates on June 2nd and 11th in connection with the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

I have designated Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division to handle the details of the exhibit and he will contact your office in regard to the space available and other related matters. He will also confer with you, or a member of your organization designated by you, regarding proper arrangements for "at home" days.

We wish to assist you in every way in which you think we might be of help in the matter and, therefore, please feel free to call upon us in connection with any additional matters which you consider necessary.

- 15 -

Thank you for your letter of May 12, indicating that the Weather Bureau is invited to prepare an exhibit for the Triennial Conference of the Associated Countrywomen of the World and be at home to members of the conference on June 2 and June 11.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already called your office to arrange details for an exhibit which we shall try to make interesting and instructive.

An estimate as to the probable number of people we may expect for each of our "at homes" will be helpful. If a large number is to be received we should work out arrangements to schedule visitation over the time available each day in order to make best use of our facilities and prepare our officials to offer delegations the attention they deserve.

We appreciate this opportunity to cooperate with you.

- 16 -

Thank you for your letter of May 12 advising of the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World to be held in Washington from June 2 to 11.

I welcome the opportunity to participate in the important work of the Conference and am pleased to accept your invitation to prepare an exhibit on the activities of our agency. Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division tells me that he has already called your office in regard to the amount of space available for

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

our exhibit. I am accordingly asking him to confer with you further concerning this matter and other details of the display.

We will be glad to be "at home" to delegates of the Conference on Tuesday, June 2, and Thursday, June 11. I am assigning the responsibility of entertaining the delegates to Miss Black, Chairman of our Social Committee. Miss Black will call you in a few days to discuss plans for entertaining the "at homes" and I am sure she will appreciate any suggestions that will make the visit of the delegates pleasant and interesting.

- 17 -

I appreciate your invitation of May 12, 1940, to cooperate with the Associated Country Women of the World during their Third Triennial Conference to be held in Washington on June 1-5.

The Blank Agency will be happy to prepare an exhibit on our work and to receive members of the Conference on June 2 and June 11.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Department has been designated to confer with your office regarding space available for the exhibit and will be glad to have any suggestions you may have on how the "at homes" can be made interesting to the delegates.

- 18 -

We will be glad to accept the invitation given in your letter of May 12 to prepare an exhibit on the work of our agency and to be "at home" to the members of the Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World on June 2 and 11.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division, who has been designated as our representative, has already called your office in regard to the space available for our exhibit.

We would like to have an estimate as to the number of people who will visit us on the two days mentioned and will appreciate any suggestions for handling the "at homes". Mr. Smith will confer with you on these matters at your convenience.

- 19 -

I have your letter of May 12, 1940, in which you call my attention to the fact that the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World will be held in Washington, D. C., on June 1 to 5.

We appreciate your invitation to prepare an exhibit on the work of our agency and your suggestion that our officials be "at home" to members of the conference on June 2 and 11. We shall be happy to act upon your suggestions. Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already called your office in regard to the space available for the exhibit. We should very much like to have an estimate from you of the number of persons who will be likely to visit us on the two days mentioned,

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

and shall be glad to have any suggestions you may make in regard to just how these "at homes" may best be handled.

I note in your letter that you mention June 2 as the date for one of these meetings, while the date appears on the tentative program as June 4. Kindly confirm the date actually set.

We are glad of the opportunity to be of assistance in this program.

- 20 -

Thank you for your letter of May 12 with which you enclosed a tentative program of the conference of your association.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already contacted your office in regard to space available for an exhibit we propose to offer.

The opportunity presented to our agency to be "at home" to members of the conference is especially interesting to us. Some details, such as providing interpreters for June 2, will have to be worked out. I would be pleased to confer with you in this connection at your convenience.

My staff here joins me in thanking you for the opportunity given to us to contribute to the success of the conference.

- 21 -

This refers to your letter of May 12 announcing the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World in June and inclosing a tentative program for the meeting.

We will be pleased to accept your invitation to prepare an exhibit relating to the work of this Agency and to be "at home" to the delegates on June 2 and 11, assuming, of course, that mutually satisfactory arrangements can be effected. The nature and cost of the exhibit, as well as the matter of available space, will need to be considered.

In accordance with your offer, we have designated Mr. John Smith of our Public Relations Division to confer with you in working out the necessary details in connection with both the exhibit and the best manner of conducting the proposed receptions of the delegates on June 2 and 11.

If we can render any further assistance to assure success of the Conference we will appreciate being so advised.

- 22 -

Your invitation of May 12, to present an exhibit at the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World, and to be "at home" on June 2 and 11, is gladly accepted.

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

I understand that Mr. Smith of our Public Relation Division, has already communicated with your office in regard to the space available for the exhibit.

Please send me any suggestions that you may have in regard to just how the "at homes" should be handled. An estimate of the probable number of people that will visit us on each of the "at homes" will also be appreciated.

- 23 -

I thank you for your letter of May 12 calling my attention to the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World to be held in Washington beginning June 1.

It will be a pleasure to prepare an exhibit; the officials of Blank Agency will be glad to entertain the members of the conference on June 2 and 11. We shall need information as to the space available for the exhibit, the number of people likely to visit our Agency, and some advice as to plans for their entertainment. It seems desirable, as you suggest, to have a conference. Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Divisions usually handles matters of this nature for the Blank Agency. He will call your office and make arrangements to discuss plans with you or one of your associates.

Please let me know if there is anything further that we can do to assist you in connection with the conference.

- 24 -

Thank you for your letter of May 12 inviting this Agency to participate in the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World.

We shall be glad to arrange an exhibit for the Conference. Mr. X X Smith of our Public Relations Division will contact your office promptly concerning available space and other details.

The Agency will reserve June 2 and June 11 for "at home" days. Any suggestions you may wish to offer concerning arrangements will be appreciated.

We are glad for the opportunity to participate in the Conference and assure you of our full cooperation in making it a success.

- 25 -

Your kind invitation to attend and participate in the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World to be held in Washington beginning June 2 is acknowledged and appreciated.

We are pleased to accept your invitation and want to assure you of our interest and pledge our cooperation in every way possible with a view of making the conference a success. Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has been requested to confer with your office and arrange for space for our exhibit and complete arrangements for the meetings.

Assuring you of our cooperation and pledging our support, we are

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

- 26 -

In reply to your letter of May 12, inviting the Blank Agency to prepare an exhibit of its activities, and to be "at home" to members of the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World, I accept, with many thanks.

Mr. Smith, of our Public Relations Division, has already telephoned your office, with regard to the space available for our exhibit. In addition to this inquiry, we would appreciate an estimate of the number of visitors whom we may expect.

I note that you mention June 2 as the date for one of these meetings, while your printed tentative program gives June 4 as the time. I hope that June 2 is the correct date.

Assuring you of our appreciation of your invitation, I am:

- 27 -

Your invitation in letter of May 12, 1940, to prepare an exhibit on the work of this agency and suggestion that our officials be "at home" on June 2nd for foreign, and on June 11th, for American delegates to the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World, meeting in Washington June 1 to June 5, is appreciated.

We will be glad to comply with your suggestion relative to the "at homes" and would like to have an estimate as to the probable attendance at each meeting. You mention June 11 for one of these meetings, while it appears on the tentative program as June 4.

Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has called your office relative to the space available for the proposed exhibit and will gladly confer with you regarding final arrangements.

We appreciate this opportunity to cooperate.

- 28 -

Reference is made to your letter of May 12, 1940, relative to the forthcoming Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World to he held in Washington.

Your kind invitation, contained in the letter referred to above, to prepare an exhibit on the work of our agency, also that we be "at home" to the delegates on June 2 and on June 11, is appreciated and accepted. We find that our Mr. Smith, Public Relations Division, has already contacted your office in this connection relative to space for an exhibit. In addition to his request it will also be helpful if we be furnished with an estimate of the probable number of people that will visit us on the "at home" dates. Any suggestions as to how the "at homes" should be handled will also be beneficial.

It is noted that you mention June 2 as the date for one of the meetings, although it appears on the tentative program as June 4. We presume that Tuesday, June 2 is the correct date.

REVISION OF LETTER PROBLEM NO. 1 A

- 29 -

Thank you for your letter of May 12, 1940 calling my attention to the fact that the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World will be held in Washington, June 1 to June 5.

Your invitation requesting us to prepare an exhibit on the work of our agency is appreciated. Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already called your office in regard to the extent of the exhibit and the space available therefor.

In order to make sufficient preparation for the entertainment of the delegates on June 2 and June 11, we would appreciate an estimate of the number who will visit us on those dates. Any suggestions you may have as to how these "at homes" may be handled will be of assistance in making the necessary preparations.

Your invitation to participate in this program is appreciated and you may be assured of our cooperation.

LETTERS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION - NO. 1A

FACTS IN THIS CASE:

In a letter dated May 12 Miss A, the General Chairman of the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World, invited the Blank Agency (1) to prepare an exhibit for the conference, and also (2) to be "at home" to delegates from foreign countries on Tuesday, June 2, and to delegates from the United States on Thursday, June 11. Miss A enclosed a tentative program which included the following:

June 2 - "At home" by Blank Agency for delegates from foreign countries.
June 4 - Visits to Government agencies and public buildings.
June 11 - "At home" by Blank Agency for delegates from the United States.

A detailed analysis of Miss A's letter follows:

1. Announcement of conference of Associated Country Women of the World.
2. Statement that reservations already made by 1,500 rural women from 20 nations.
3. Invitation to prepare exhibit for the conference.
4. Invitation to be "at home" on Tuesday, June 2 and Thursday, June 11.
5. Offer to indicate to Chief, or to person or persons designated by him, amount of space available for exhibit.
6. Offer to confer further regarding plans for the "at homes" and the exhibit.

PROPOSED REPLY TO MISS A. * (to be appraised)

I have your letter of May 12 in which you call my attention to the fact that the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World will be held here in Washington June 1 to June 5.

I appreciate your invitation to prepare an exhibit on the work of our agency and your suggestion that officials of our agency be "at home" to members of the conference on June 2 and June 11. I assure you that we will be happy to comply with your suggestions. I understand that Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already called your office in regard to the space available for an exhibit. We would like very much to have an estimate from you as to the probable number of people that will visit us on the two days mentioned and will be glad to have any suggestions that you may have in regard to just how these "at homes" should be handled. I note in your letter that you mention June 2 as the date for one of these meetings, while it appears on the tentative program as June 4. I trust that Tuesday, June 2 is the date that you have in mind.

Assuring you that we appreciate this opportunity to cooperate with you, I am

ASSIGNMENT

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of the reply to Miss A, using the standards listed in the Letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a non-essential statement has been included, mark it "2a".

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general *effectiveness* of the reply to Miss A:

OUTSTANDING GOOD PASSABLE UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write to Miss A. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent to Miss A.

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* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.

LETTERS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION - NO. 14

LETTER IN VERY CASES:

In a letter dated May 12 Miss A, the General Chairman of the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World, invited the Miami Agency (1) to prepare an exhibit for the conference, and also (2) to be "at home" to delegates from various countries on Tuesday, June 2, and to delegates from the United States on Thursday, June 11. Miss A enclosed a tentative program which included the following:

June 2 - "At home" by Miami Agency for delegates from foreign countries.
June 4 - Visits to government agencies and public buildings.
June 11 - "At home" by Miami Agency for delegates from the United States.

A detailed analysis of Miss A's letter follows:

1. Announcement of conference of Associated Country Women of the World.
2. Statement that representations already made by 4,700 ladies coming from 30 nations.
3. Invitation to prepare exhibit for the conference.
4. Invitation to be "at home" on Tuesday, June 2 and Thursday, June 11.
5. Offer to indicate to Chair, or to person or persons designated by him, amount of space available for exhibit.
6. Offer to confer further regarding plans for the "at homes" and the exhibit.

RESPONSE REPLY TO MISS A: * (to be appreciated)

I have your letter of May 12 in which you call my attention to the fact that the Third Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World will be held here in Washington June 1 to June 3.

I appreciate your invitation to prepare an exhibit on the work of our agency and your suggestion that officials of our agency be "at home" to members of the conference on June 2 and June 11. I assure you that we will be happy to comply with your suggestions. I understand that Mr. Smith of our Public Relations Division has already called your office in regard to the space available for an exhibit. We would like very much to have an estimate from you as to the approximate number of people that will visit us on the two days mentioned and will be glad to have any suggestions that you may have in regard to just how these "at homes" should be handled. I note in your letter that you mention June 3 as the date for one of these meetings, while it appears on the tentative program as June 4. I trust that Tuesday, June 2 is the date that you have in mind.

Assuring you that we appreciate this opportunity to cooperate with you, I am

ARRANGEMENT

A. Indicate in the margins the weaknesses of the reply to Miss A, using the standards listed in the letter Appraisal Chart. For example, if a non-essential statement has been included, mark it "ns".

B. Underline the word which best expresses your rating of the general effectiveness of the reply to Miss A:

OUTSTANDING	GOOD	FAIRNESS	UNSATISFACTORY

C. Construct a plan for the kind of letter you would write to Miss A. Remember that a plan, as the skeleton or framework of the letter, should be written in the form of a concise outline.

D. Write the kind of letter you think should be sent to Miss A.

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* It is not to be assumed that all the letters included in this series of correspondence problems were finally approved and mailed.